

CENTENARY HISTORY  
OF THE CHESHIRE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
UNION (1806-1906)

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A History of the  
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# A History of the Cheshire County Union of Congregational Churches

*Prepared (to commemorate its Centenary, 1806-1906)*

*at the request of the Executive Committee*

BY

FRED. JAMES POWICKE, PH.D.

AUTHOR OF "JOHN NORRIS, OF BEMERTON"

"HENRY BARROW, SEPARATIST," ETC.

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## PREFACE.

THIS is not a History of Nonconformity, nor even of Congregationalism, in Cheshire. It makes no claim to cover the ground, already traversed so well by my predecessor at Hatherlow, Mr. Urwick, and his coadjutors, in the work which they published more than forty years ago. It is, what its title says, a History of the Cheshire Union, and particularly of those Churches in it which have been founded, or fostered, by its means. Hence the relatively large space given to these; and hence, also, the fact that, with regard to the older Churches, I have been content, on the whole, to assume a knowledge of Mr. Urwick's work and merely to supplement its account from the date (1864) down to which it extends.

The historical introduction, moreover, is largely based on the material collected by Mr. Urwick, though here an attempt has been made so to use, or adjust, the material as to bring out more distinctly the relation of the earlier Nonconformist or Presbyterian elements to the state of Independency at the time when the Union came on the scene.

In treating the main subject my authorities have been, in the first place, the Annual Reports of the Union—with two or three exceptions, almost a complete series; but information supplied by a large number of correspondents has also been, here and there, of great use; and to these kindly helpers I beg to tender my hearty thanks.

The Union owes a vast debt of gratitude to many

earnest supporters who have passed away—how many only one who has read the Reports can understand,—and it would have been a pleasant task to revive their memory, had space permitted. As it is, the few that have been mentioned may be taken to represent the many no less worthy, perhaps, “whose record is on high.” Of those still active in their faithful service of the Union little or nothing has been said.

The illustrations (of buildings) have been carefully selected, and are meant to exhibit such as are of real historic interest, or are among the oldest in the county, or may serve to mark what the Union has assisted to achieve.

In conclusion, the labour so readily undertaken by the Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A., of Cheadle; the Rev. T. W. Pinn, M.A., of Stockport, in reading the proofs; and the Rev. H. W. Turner, B.A., of Wilmslow, in making the index, demands very warm acknowledgment; while to the Rev. Frederick Carter, the General Secretary of the Union, special thanks are due for manifold assistance, such as he alone was in a position to render.

FRED. J. POWICKE.

HATHERLOW,

*February, 1907.*



# CONTENTS.

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| PREFACE .. .. .   | v       |
| HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION .. .. .   | 1—20    |
| GENERAL SURVEY OF THE UNION'S WORK AND GROWTH ..  | 21—71   |
| AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS .. .. .   | 72—78   |
| ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCHES AND STATIONS .. .. .  | 79—271  |
| CHAIRMEN OF THE UNION .. .. .   | 81, 82  |
| GENERAL SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS .. .. .  | 83, 84  |
| BOWDON DISTRICT .. .. .   | 85—119  |
| CHESTER DISTRICT .. .. .  | 120—147 |
| CREWE DISTRICT .. .. .  | 148—172 |
| STOCKPORT DISTRICT .. .. .  | 173—248 |
| WIRRAL DISTRICT .. .. .   | 249—271 |
| APPENDIX i., Nonconformist Ejectments in Cheshire (1660—1662)   | 273—275 |
| ,, ii., Cheshire Licences granted in 1672 .. .. .   | 276—279 |
| ,, iii., Names of the places where the meetings of the<br>Union have been held .. .. .  | 280—282 |
| ,, iv., Churches once aided .. .. .   | 283     |
| ,, v., Chronological list of the Unions, Aided Stations,<br>with their Out Stations (so far as shown in the<br>Reports) .. .. . | 284—288 |
| ,, vi., Out Stations—from year of first insertion in the<br>Reports (1862) .. .. .  | 289—291 |
| ,, vii., Rules of the Union (1806—1906) .. .. .   | 292—305 |
| ,, viii., Table of Receipts and Expenditure (1806—1906)   | 306—309 |
| INDEX .. .. .   | 311     |



# ILLUSTRATIONS.

| PORTRAITS.                                      |                     | CHAPELS.                                      |                      |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| Rev. Jonathan Scott . . }                       | <i>Facing p.</i> 16 | King Edward Street,<br>Macclesfield . . . }   | <i>Facing Title.</i> |
| Rev. Job Wilson . . . }                         |                     | Knutsford Chapel . . }                        |                      |
| Rev. Dr. A. Mackennal }                         | 81                  | Dean Row . . . . }                            | " <i>p.</i> 86       |
| Mr. G. Stanley Wood . }                         |                     | Ashton-on-Mersey . . }                        |                      |
| Mr. Abraham Haworth }                           | 89                  | Lymm . . . . . }                              | " 95                 |
| Mr. William Milne . . }                         |                     | Partington . . . . }                          |                      |
| Rev. James Turner . . }                         | 130                 | Bucklow Hill . . . }                          | " 117                |
| Rev. Richard Knill . . }                        |                     | Frodsham . . . . }                            |                      |
| Mr. Thomas Rigby . . }                          | 143                 | Moulton . . . . . }                           | " 127                |
| Mr. Thomas Huxley . }                           |                     | Malpas . . . . . }                            |                      |
| Mr. R. Dutton, sen. . }                         | 155                 | Barton . . . . . }                            | " 163                |
| Rev. F. Carter (General<br>Secretary) . . . . } |                     | Farndon . . . . . }                           |                      |
| Rev. Jno. Marshall . . }                        | 165                 | Tattenhall . . . . }                          | " 173                |
| Mr. William Hitchen . }                         |                     | Matthew Henry's<br>Chapel, Chester . }        |                      |
| Mr. George Jackson . }                          | 179                 | Queen Street, Chester . }                     | " 189                |
| Professor Herbert . . }                         |                     | Cottage at Over . . }                         |                      |
| Rev. J. W. Paull . . }                          | 185                 | The Cotton Room, Over<br>Old Chapel, Over . } | " 207                |
| Rev. J. Moore . . . . }                         |                     | Minshull Chapel . . }                         |                      |
| Mr. B. Radley, J.P. . }                         | 193                 | Haslington . . . . }                          | " 219                |
| Rev. W. Urwick . . . }                          |                     | Wheelock . . . . . }                          |                      |
| Rev. T. Robinson . . }                          | 201                 | Sandbach . . . . . }                          | " 255                |
| Mr. Alderman Lees . . }                         |                     | Brereton . . . . . }                          |                      |
| Mr. F. Midwood . . . }                          | 211                 | Tintwistle . . . . }                          | " 257                |
| Rev. G. B. Kidd . . . }                         |                     | Chadkirk . . . . . }                          |                      |
| Rev. S. Bowen . . . . }                         | 243                 | Hatherlow (Old) Chapel }                      | " 257                |
| Mr. Alderman Thomp-<br>son . . . . . }          |                     | Townley Street, Maccles-<br>field . . . . . } |                      |
| Mr. Joseph Wood . . . }                         | 257                 | Bollington . . . . }                          | " 257                |
| Rev. R. F. Gwyther . . }                        |                     | Roe Street, Macclesfield }                    |                      |
| Mr. J. E. Blenkarn . . }                        | 257                 | The Tabernacle, Stock-<br>port . . . . . }    | " 257                |
| Mr. George Atkin, J.P. }                        |                     | Orchard Street, Stock-<br>port . . . . . }    |                      |
|   |                     | Wellington Road, Stock-<br>port . . . . . }   | " 257                |
|   |                     | Hoylake . . . . . }                           |                      |
|   |                     | Seacombe . . . . . }                          | " 257                |
|   |                     |   |                      |





PART I  
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

## SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES

- 1643 . . January 26 . . Parliament finally passes the Bill "for the utter taking away of" the Episcopal system "out of the Church of England." (Shaw's "History of the English Church," 1640—1660, vol. i. p. 121.)
- 1643 . . July 1 . . The Westminster Assembly meets for the first time.
- 1643 . . September 22 . . "The Solemn League and Covenant" sworn to by both Houses of Parliament at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster. (Shaw, i. p. 142.)
- 1645 . . August 23 . . An ordinance passed by "Lords and Commons" "for the more effectual putting in execution the Directory for Public Worship," adopted on March 5th previously. (By this Ordinance persons reading the Common Prayer Book openly in Churches were to pay £5 for a first offence, £10 for a second, and for a third to suffer a year's imprisonment without bail; while Ministers neglecting to use the Directory were to pay 40s. for every neglect, and anyone depraving the same either by speech or writing was to suffer a fine of not less than £5 and not more than £50. (Shaw, i. p. 356.)
- 1646 . . June . . Parliament orders the establishment of the Presbyterian System in England.
- 1646 . . October 2 . . Erection of the system in Lancashire. (Shaw, ii. p. 393; see Shaw, ii. p. 373, as to Cheshire.)
- 1653 . . September 14 . . Voluntary Association of Cheshire Ministers decided upon at Wilmslow.
- 1662 . . August 24 . . The Act of Uniformity comes into force.
- 1672 . . March 15 . . The King issues a Declaration of Indulgence.
- 1689 . . May 17 . . An Act passed (known as the Toleration Act) "for exempting their Majesties Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain laws."
- 1691 . . March . . Association of Cheshire Ministers (Presbyterian and Independent) formed at King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield.
- 1786 . . June 7 . . Association formed at Bolton of "different Congregational Churches in Lancashire and other neighbouring Churches," including Cheshire (Slate's "Brief History of the Lancashire Union," p. 3).
- 1798 . . August 22 . . Itinerant Society formed at Tintwistle, of Ministers in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire.
- 1806 . . September 23 . . Formation (at Mosley Street Chapel, Manchester) of the Lancashire Union of Independent Churches.
- 1806 . . September 25 . . Proposal to form a separate "Cheshire Union" decided upon at the Rev. Job Wilson's house, Northwich.
- 1806 . . November 5 . . The Union formed at Townley Street Chapel, Macclesfield.



## PART I

### I.—HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

THERE is no trace of Lollardry in Cheshire any more than in Lancashire or Yorkshire or the northern counties generally. That great reformatory movement was almost confined to the counties south of the Humber and the Trent. But traces of Puritanism, the precursor of Nonconformity in the stricter sense, appear early in Cheshire. Thus, during Archbishop Grindal's rule (1575-1583), "it seemed good to the Lord," we read, "having compassion on his people to raise up and establish many holy exercises of religion both in Cheshire and Lancashire, which were kept constantly every month, and maintained worthily by the godly labours of the faithful ministers and messengers of God in those parts with great and comfortable success and fruit." Whitgift, the successor of Grindal, put down such exercises as far as possible; and, under Richard Vaughan, Bishop of Chester (1596-1604), the Cheshire ministers who adhered to them, or to any other Puritan practices, were severely dealt with. A later attempt at suppression reveals to us the fact that the ministers had many friends among the laymen—not only the common people, but the knights and gentlemen of the county. Thus (in 1619) these latter subscribed a letter to the Bishop protesting against the citation of "divers" of their "painful and discreet ministers" before his Court of High Commission, and testifying earnestly to their "integrity of life and conversation, orthodox soundness of doctrine, diligence and painfulness in their places, sobriety and peaceableness in their dispositions, and freedom from faction"—as well as to "the great good and profit which the congregations where they live have abundantly received from their ministry." A revival of the early prophesyings, under the title of "Lectures," in Charles the First's reign (1625-49) flashes a further light on the Cheshire Puritans—enabling us to

form some idea of their extent and number. For the "Lectures" were nowhere more widely popular; and "the ministers had their spiritually glorious monthly exercises at Northwich, Namptwich, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Bowden, Frodsham, Budworth, Tarpoley, Tarvin, Ince, Motteram, &c., and solemn assemblies, besides their blessed Sabbaths, frequented by sundry of the renowned gentry and very many well-disposed people, whereby they purchased to themselves a good degree in Christianity." Another clear item of evidence to the like effect dates from 1640 when the Cheshire Puritans showed themselves foremost in petitioning against abuses in Church and State, and presented to Parliament a document signed—it is said—by the bulk of the common people. In this petition the Prelates, with "their corrupt canons, booke of articles, the English refined masse-booke of Common Prayer"—are God's "mightie enemies and secret underminers of the good Estate of our Church and commonwealth"; while the object to be aimed at is that "the revealed will of God contained in the Books of the Old and New Testaments, and recorded for our practise in the dayes of the Gospell, may be that Rule which your Honors would be pleased to follow." Then "wee might see the morall Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles made old England's canons, then might our ministers have liberty to preach God's Word and administer the sacraments according to the mind of Christ and *our congregations power to execute ecclesiastical censures within themselves.*" It was probably this last sentence which led the Presbyterian chronicler to suggest that the framers of the Petition "do not seek for Presbytery, but seem rather to affect a popular government." It was hardly to be expected that they would "seek for Presbytery" in 1641—two years at least before the "Westminster Assembly of Divines" began to sit; or "the Solemn League and Covenant" was thought of. All the same, they were by no means biassed towards Independency.

It might be unsafe to infer as much from the mere fact that when the Covenant came out in the autumn of 1643 it was signed by two-thirds of the Cheshire clergy. This proves that a large majority of the Cheshire clergy were animated by a desire to see the Church reformed in doctrine, worship, discipline, and

government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches, and so to extirpate Popery and Prelacy. But it need not of itself imply dislike of Independency or preference for Presbyterianism. There were Independents who signed the Covenant, Philip Nye, *e.g.*, who did not suppose themselves committed thereby to Presbyterianism. When, however, we find it made a matter of complaint by an advocate of the "learned and active clergy" in the county that in 1646 the Independents, or Sectaries, have dared to promote "an anti-petition in Cheshire," *i.e.* a petition against the great Petition for the setting up of Presbyterial government ;<sup>1</sup> and that they have actually two or three Independent churches and are setting up two or three more—this is proof that the Independents, though aggressive, were comparatively weak. The anti-petition, in fact, "was framed and set on foot by the members of the church at Duckingfield," and outside "Duckingfield" Independency had no foothold in Cheshire at this time.<sup>2</sup> It had individual sympathisers, or groups of sympathisers, here and there who vexed the souls of the "learned and active clergy" by their zeal ; but it had no representative among the clergy themselves. These, on the whole, went strongly with their brethren in London and Lancashire, who construed allegiance to the Covenant to mean allegiance to the Presbyterian proposals of the Westminster Assembly. Prominent among such proposals was one to suppress "errours, Heresies and Blasphemies," and all movements tending to the toleration of variety in Church government.

In violent support of this the London ministry issued in 1648 "a Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ and to our solemn League and Covenant : as also against the errours, Heresies and Blasphemies of these Times and the Toleration of them." A copy of this very unchristian document speedily reached the hands of the Rev. John Ley, preacher at Astbury, who laid it before the next meeting of Cheshire ministers on May 2nd, and carried them with him in a resolution to endorse it—which they did at their next meeting (at Northwich) on June 6th, when fifty-

<sup>1</sup> 25th August 1646.

<sup>2</sup> So far as the Rev. Samuel Eaton established an Independent church in Chester, it belongs to a time somewhat later.

nine subscribed "An attestation to the Testimony of our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to our Solemn League and Covenant." What this involved was, assent to the proposition that "the Presbyteriall Government (truly so called) is that Government which is most agreeable to the mind of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture;" and, at the same time, to a policy of drastic persecution. For, after enumerating nineteen "errours"—the last being the error of Toleration or Liberty of Conscience—the Testimony concludes: "All which errours, Heresies, and blasphemies—with all others amongst us—we are confident we may—without the least breach of charity to any the Authors, fautours, or abettours of them—utterly loath, execrate, and abhorre: hoping that as God hath stirred up the Lords and Commons in Parliament to publish their ordinance concerning the growth and spreading of Errours, Heresies, and blasphemies—setting apart a day of publike humiliation to seek God's assistance for the suppressing and preventing the same (4th Feb. 1646), so, in His rich mercy to England, He will at length finde out some effectual means by authority of Parliament, for the utter abolition and extirpation of them all out of this distressed Church."

It was little to their credit that the Cheshire ministers should "attest" an attitude so unenlightened. But it is at least a proof that they were far away from Independency, whose attitude in the matter of toleration was very different. Independency stood for liberty; and just on that account seemed to the Cheshire ministers, "if not the natural mother, yet such a tender nurse and patroness to heretical opinions of all kinds that to it we may (for a great part) ascribe the luxuriant growth and spreading of errors, heresies, &c., so far over this kingdom." Its political triumph, therefore, was a grief to them. They regarded the acts of Cromwell and the army, by which its triumph came to pass, as a series of "villanies" (Adam Martindale's word). And, though most of them subscribed the "engagement" (1649), or promise to be true and faithful to the Commonwealth, it was a bitter pill. How could it be otherwise for men who had bound themselves, by taking the Covenant, "to have before their eyes the honour and happiness of the King's Majesty and his posterity,

and to maintain and defend the power and privileges of Parliament"? But the new order, however detestable in the abstract, worked well. Practical acquaintance with Independency did much to dispel its terrors. There were many who professed to hate Cromwell and his rule, but were glad to be under it, and secretly hoped for its continuance. Independency, in fact, with its wholesale respect for the people and their rights, was more agreeable to the temper of England than Presbyterianism, with its severely limited notions of popular freedom. Hence the breakdown which took place everywhere—even in London and Lancashire—of the Presbyterian system so far as expressed by a "classical" organisation of the churches. It is well known how ordinance after ordinance was issued by Parliament (prior to the Cromwellian period) with the purpose of organising the churches under session, classis, Synod, and Assembly according to the Scottish model. It is well known, too, how the efforts made in this direction by many counties (besides London) came to nothing as soon as they ceased to be backed up by State authority. They lacked the moral support of a widespread sympathy. Cheshire was no exception to the rule. Dr. Shaw<sup>1</sup> points out that "the ordination of Henry Newcome at Sandbach on the 22nd of August 1648" is evidence "that there was a purely classical organisation in Cheshire" at that date. Ministers, that is, were ordained after the "manner" prescribed by the ordinance of August 1646.<sup>2</sup> They would mean all the other parts of the Government to come duly into force. But there is no reason to suppose that they succeeded except very partially. The Prayer-book might be laid aside, but the Directory did not take its place. The Bishop's jurisdiction came to an end for the time being; but it was not succeeded by the jurisdiction of Presbytery. Cheshire, as a whole, was never subject to the latter. However much the ministers desired it, their congregations made it impracticable. There was perhaps no theoretic preference for Independency, but practical independence became the rule—issuing in a variety of usage which some called chaotic.

It was partly to correct this state of things and promote a

<sup>1</sup> "English Church in the Commonwealth," vol. ii. p. 373.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 336.



more visible uniformity of discipline that what has been called the first Cheshire Union came into being.

“Voluntary associations” in lieu of the decaying classical organisations sprang up independently, first of all, in Worcestershire on the one hand and Westmoreland and Cumberland on the other. The movement quickly spread to other counties until some fifteen of various extent and scope had originated during the years from 1653 to 1660. Richard Baxter was the mainspring of them. He had in view the uniting of men who might be nominally Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Independent, but were essentially one in their hatred of schism and love of godliness and peace. And their union or association was to have for its principal object “the most effectual practice of so much discipline as might reduce the churches to order, satisfie ministers in administering the Sacraments, and stop the more religious people from separation.”<sup>1</sup>

The Cheshire association, which was mooted “at a meeting of ministers at Wilmslow” in September 1653, and constituted at Knutsford on 20th October the same year, followed these lines. “We agreed in our classis,” says Adam Martindale, “by mutuall consent, upon such rules for the administration of Baptisme and the Lord’s Supper, as also of the solemnisation of matrimonie, as my religious neighbours seemed well pleased with. And as for transactions among ourselves, we never disputed about the power of Church-guides, nor libertie of the brethren. For smaller matters, that came of course, they were willing enough the officers should dispatch without troubling the societie. And for those that were weightier—as receiving in new communicants, or suspending any from communion that had been before admitted . . . we allwayes tooke their consent along with us, which we used to aske after the sacrament, or at a weekeday conference. And so unanimous we were, that though most of all the communicants that were accounted the chiefe for parts and pietie leaned much towards the congregationall way of Church government, and some of them for their naturall tempers peevish enough, and great admirers, not onely of Mr. Eaton, but of diverse of his gifted brethren, yet I cannot

<sup>1</sup> Shaw, ii. p. 154.

remember that so much as one of them forsooke us, or that we had any breach or considerable controversie among us, but we went sweetly and comfortable so long as libertie continued.”<sup>1</sup> Martindale here describes both the scope of the association and its working among his own people. The former was limited to an agreement in rules for administering the sacraments and for discipline; the latter proved beneficial because not forced upon the people, but accepted voluntarily. In this respect we may note an approach to the Congregational principle. But it is to be noted, all the same, that the association was by no means congregational in sentiment. Most of its members were certainly Presbyterian, or moderately Episcopalian,<sup>2</sup> drawn together by a prevailing desire to find some common ground of action for the sake of peace. Moreover, it did not cover the whole county; it was composed of ministers—beneficed ministers only; and it had no thought of evangelisation. If, therefore, we speak of it as a precursor of our own Union, we can do so only in a loose sort of way.

The Restoration broke up the Cheshire as it did the other voluntary associations, and thirty-one years elapsed before the next “classis” arose. These years created and established Nonconformity properly so called. As a result of the Act of 1662, which demanded assent and consent to everything in a prayer-book diligently modified in the direction of strictness, some sixty Cheshire ministers<sup>3</sup> were found unable to retain at the same time their livings and a good conscience. The Conventicle Act of 1664 (renewed and made more stringent in 1670) and the Five Mile Act of 1665 were ruthless attempts to stamp them out. But the success achieved was partial only. Clear proof of this may be gathered from the Tenison MS.,<sup>4</sup> now in the Lambeth Library—a survey of “Dissent in England and Wales,” compiled at the instance of Archbishop Sheldon about 1669. Here we get light with regard to the distribution of unlawful “conventicles” in Cheshire which, though incomplete and sometimes vague, is as curious as it is instructive. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> Adam Martindale's Diary, pp. 117, 118.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Urwick mentions four whose bent was Congregational—George Moxon of Astbury, Thomas Harrison of Chester, John Wilson of Dackford, and John Harvey of Wallasey. (Paper read before the Union in 1867.)

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix i.

<sup>4</sup> No. 639, fol. 279.

Lymm is said to have had three meetings within six months of Nonconformists to the number of sixty or eighty each time; Knutsford has a meeting of Quakers; Ashton-on-Mersey has frequent conventicles; Grapenhall, besides Quakers and Anabaptists, has numerous and frequent "conventicles" in a Chappell belonging to Budworth Parish; Daresbury has a conventicle of Quakers; Great Budworth has conventicles of Anabaptists, fifth monarchy men, and great numbers of Quakers meeting twice a week; Rostherne has several conventicles, sometimes numbering ten or less, sometimes two hundred; Bo(w)den has a meeting of Nonconformists at Ringoe (Ringway) Chappell to a very great number; Frodsham has a conventicle of Quakers; Runcorne has the like; Bosley has a meeting of Nonconformists; Wilmslow has several and frequent meetings of Quakers, Independents, and Presbyterians; Prestbury has a conventicle of Nonconformists in Bosley Chapelry; Adlington has several (persons) that frequent conventicles in other places; Moberley has a meeting of Quakers, Anabaptists, and Independents; Mottram in Longendale has meetings of Quakers in Hattersley; Alderley has a conventicle of bad persons; Stockport has a conventicle of Nonconformists; Marple has a frequent meeting of Nonconformists; Disley has several (persons) who frequent conventicles elsewhere; Gawsworth has a meeting of fifty Quakers; Astbury has several meetings, one of twenty persons, also a meeting of Quakers; Sandbach has a frequent meeting of Quakers; Middlewich has a meeting of Quakers; Wrenbury has (by report) several conventicles; Namptwich has a conventicle of twenty Quakers and of twenty, forty, or fifty Nonconformists; Acton has a meeting of Quakers; Bartomley has several conventicles; Chester has a conventicle of Quakers in its parish of St. Peters, a conventicle (undefined) in its parish of St. Oswald's, "divers' conventicles" in its parish of St. John's; finally, Tarporley has a frequent conventicle of Anabaptists in great numbers.

Cheshire, then, in 1669 was infested with what the Archbishop would consider hot-beds of schism.

In 1672 the "iron hand" was lifted for a while by the King's declaration of Indulgence—which repealed all acts against Non-

conformists and Catholics; and the licences taken out for, or by, preachers enable us to see more clearly the relative extent of Presbyterians and Independents in the county. The Licence Book containing the names of registered places and ministers, and preserved in the Record Office, has been searched more thoroughly since the date of "the Historical Sketches of Non-conformity" (1864), with the result that its estimate of the licences issued for Cheshire is found to be very considerably below the mark. According to Mr. Urwick the total number was 12—9 Presbyterian and 3 Congregational. But there were really as many as 62—including one Baptist, and two undefined. Of the Presbyterian, 4 were granted for persons or places in the Wirral, 8 (or 6) for Chester, 2 for Mouldsworth, 2 for Knutsford, 1 for Rostherne, 1 for Bowdon, 1 for Northenden, 1 for Weaverham, 2 for Stockport, 3 for Mottram, 1 for Wilmslow, 2 for Prestbury, 2 for Sandbach, 3 for Macclesfield, 2 for Rainow, 1 for Astbury, 4 for Nantwich, 4 for Bartomley, 1 for Wybunbury, 1 for Malpas, 1 for Goostrey, 1 for Norbury, 1 for Gawsworth. Of the Congregational 4 (or 6) were granted for Chester, 1 for Tarporley, 1 for Stockport, 2 for Wilmslow, 1 for Astbury, 1 for Monks Coppenhall, 1 for Wrenbury. The one Baptist was granted for Stockport.<sup>1</sup>

The Presbyterians, we see, are indicated as outnumbering the Congregationalists by six to one. The line between the two, however, was already becoming somewhat shadowy—hence the fact, *e.g.*, that, under the head of Chester, John Wilson and William Cooke are both licensed twice—once as Congregational teacher and again as a Presbyterian.

This line tended to grow still more shadowy as time went on. For circumstances compelled the Presbyterians to adopt a Congregational form of church government; and as to doctrine there was at first no substantial difference between them. Accordingly the union of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, or rather of their ministers—which took place at the beginning of 1691 was largely the recognition of an accomplished fact. The terms of the Union were published under the title "Heads of Agreement"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix ii. for particulars.

<sup>2</sup> The nine "Heads" are printed in Urwick, Introduction, pp. 54, 55.

assented to by "the United Ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational; not as a measure for any national constitution, but for the preservation of order in our congregations that cannot come up to the common rule by law established." This scheme received a widespread welcome—nowhere more promptly or heartily than in Cheshire. It may have been the immediate occasion of the second Cheshire association. We say "may have been" because the first meeting of the associated ministers—held at Macclesfield in March 1690-91—makes no reference to this London "agreement"; but is concerned with "the case relating to the gesture to be used by the minister in the administration of the Lord's Supper." The "agreement of ye London ministers" was read over "for the first time on April 14" and "ordered to be read again the next meeting" (probably in May). It would thus appear as if the local movement had no direct connection with that of London and had started spontaneously about the same time. The new association, like the one before it, was purely ministerial, and its objects were much the same—viz., the determining of rules with a view to the furtherance of common action within the several churches—rules to be made and accepted voluntarily. Thus at the fourth meeting of the classis (June 30, 1691) "a project was drawn up for a rule to be observed in ye admission of members into church communion, particularly unto the Lord's Supper for God's glory and godly edifying"; and at the next general meeting (August 11), after agreeing that two general meetings should be held in May and August annually, "Rules<sup>1</sup> were consented to for the Promoting of Peace and Unity among themselves and ye congregations and for mutual edification." Glancing through the minutes one soon gets the impression that, while always couching their resolutions under the form of advice, the ministers expected compliance as a matter of course, and were disposed to resent an independent attitude. One gets the impression equally that the congregations on the whole were quite content to have it so—though there were exceptions. In short, the predominant spirit was decidedly Presbyterian—a natural consequence of the fact that men of Presbyterian views

<sup>1</sup> They are printed in Urwick, Introduction, p. 58.



predominated in the membership. In its later years the Association became little else than an agency for the licensing or ordaining of ministers ; and here there can be no doubt of its Presbyterian character. Candidates received a licence to preach with a view to settlement after they had been commended to the classis by sufficient testimonials of general fitness and been examined in "the languages, Philosophy, and Theology." Their ordination took place when the settled minister or his people made request for it. In the case of a Congregationalist, ordination is an act of the particular church to which a man has been called to minister—an act performed representatively by certain other ministers invited for the purpose. Moreover, it does not confer ministerial status, but simply recognises it. But in the cases before us the classis did everything : appointed the place and time of ordination ; and the men who took part in it ; and followed an undeviating order of procedure which made the man a minister in general. This was Presbyterianism, and is enough of itself to distinguish the "classis" from an association like our own.

As already said, the classis originated in 1691, and held its regular meetings twice a year till September 1745. Its last entry records the arrangements provided for the ordination of Mr. Meanley of Nantwich at "next meeting," and there is no apparent reason why the "next meeting" never came off. But if Mr. Meanley was a Socinian, and some of the brethren were opposed to him on that account, a good reason is supplied. The disintegrating influences of what is known as the Socinian controversy had long been actively at work among "Protestant Dissenters." At one time they had been inclined to agree with Dr. South (the eminent Episcopal preacher), that the Socinians were "impious blasphemers, whose infamous pedigree runs back from wretch to wretch in a direct line to the devil himself." In 1697 they waited on the king and urged him to interdict the printing of any work in favour of Socinian doctrines ; and they approved the Act of the following year by which "any person found writing, printing, publishing, or circulating any works, or preaching, against the doctrine of the Trinity" was condemned to lose nearly all the privileges of citizenship ; he could neither sue nor be sued, and neither bequeath nor receive property. "He was disabled for ever from



holding any public office, and he was to be imprisoned for three years without bail." In those days heresy as regards the Trinitarian dogma was the worst of crimes. It was "more profitable, so far as this world is concerned, for a man to live in open violation of the whole of the moral law than for him to deny the truth of the Athanasian creed." But this very intolerance, so fanatical and irrational, evolved a reaction in thoughtful minds, and led to a more careful study of the matter. There were, moreover, writers on the Socinian side whose scholarship, reasonableness, and candour appealed strongly to such minds. The result was that converts to opinions more or less Socinian became of frequent occurrence, particularly among the Presbyterian ministers, who "were men, for the most part, of larger reading than other Nonconformists." But the fact of this secret change was little more than suspected before 1718. Then it sprang to light through the case of James Peirce, a Presbyterian minister in the city of Exeter. His position, though anti-Trinitarian, was so far orthodox that he could say: "I believe the Son and Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father." This, however, was not the accepted formula, and nothing else would do. Exeter, therefore, was soon ablaze with controversy—nay, "from this time scarcely any question was debated throughout the west of England but the question of the Trinity. It was discussed in families, preached about from the pulpit, written about in pamphlets, and the local journals teemed with intelligence of what was being said and done."

The London ministers took it up at a meeting held in Salter's Hall on February 9, 1719. All were of opinion that "a letter of advice" should be sent to "the brethren at Exeter"; but the Congregational ministers, with Thomas Bradbury of Fetter Lane Chapel at their head, urged that before preparing the letter all present should subscribe the first article of the Established Church on the doctrine of the Trinity, and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions in the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. This motion, pressed to a vote, was lost by 73 to 69—the non-subscribers basing their refusal on the sound reason that the imposition of such a credal test was inconsistent with the principles of Protestant dissent. The minority hereupon with-

drew and formed an assembly of its own. Both assemblies then addressed to the Exeter brethren "advices of Peace"—which arrived too late to be of any use. For, in the meantime, "The Trustees, after consulting with seven neighbouring ministers, and without bringing the question before the church or congregation, took upon themselves to lock Peirce out of his chapel." Considering that the trust-deed—like all similar trust-deeds of that time—contained no specification of doctrines, this act was illegal as well as unkind, and its effect was to encourage a widespread sympathy with the sufferer—an effect intensified by the fact that in the strife of tongue and pen which ran and raged through the land, the subscribers, headed by Bradbury, displayed far more violence than the non-subscribers, headed by Peirce himself. It was, indeed, a grave misfortune that the cause of "orthodoxy" should have been represented by men, mostly Independent ministers, who succeeded in identifying it with what was irrational, narrow, and harsh; whereas the other side, represented for the most part by Presbyterian ministers, became identified in the popular mind with the principle of tolerance and intellectual freedom.

Here, as much as anywhere, lay the explanation of the readiness with which Presbyterian congregations followed their ministers in the direction of Unitarianism; at any rate they did follow them. No sooner was Peirce excluded from his chapel than his friends, to the number of 300, built him another. In no long time "nearly every Nonconformist church in Exeter, and some of the principal churches in Devonshire and Somersetshire, lapsed from the orthodox standard. The Presbyterian churches of London, Lancashire, and Cheshire became similarly infected. In less than half a century the doctrines of the great founders of Presbyterianism could scarcely be heard from any Presbyterian pulpit in England." Cheshire affords a striking example of this transformation. We have seen that its Protestant dissenting churches were mostly Presbyterian. According to a document in Dr. Williams's library, which records "the state of the dissenting interest in the several counties of England and Wales, collected in the year 1715," Cheshire then had 20 congregations, of which 2 are marked Independent, viz. Congleton and Chadkirk (or

Bradbury), 3 Baptist, and 11 Presbyterian. A more particular account, covering the years from 1717 to 1729, puts the number at 21, exclusive of the three Baptist chapels at "Nantwich, Hill Cliff near Warrington, Worford near Macclesfield."

All these 21 are described under the head of *Presbyterian*.

We pass on to "a state of the Dissenting interest in the several counties of England and Wales, begun to be collected October 1772," and we find that the number is still 21—not including Baptists at Hill Cliff, Bollington (near Bowdon?), Nantwich, and Brassie Green (near Bunbury).

By this date the specific distinction between Presbyterian and Independent had vanished. From the point of view of Church-government they might all have been named with equal propriety either Independent or Presbyterian. The distinction between them had become doctrinal. Independent meant orthodox; Presbyterian meant Socinian or Unitarian. And the latter exceeded the former alike in number and importance. Allostock, Chester, Congleton, Dean Row, Duckinfield, Hale, Hyde, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Cross Street, Stockport—all were going the same way. Of the rest, Kingsley and Wheelock Heath, though still retaining the name Presbyterian, ultimately drifted into the hands of the Baptists. Lymm became extinct. Six only have survived as orthodox and independent—Chester (a quite recent secession from Crook Street), Hatherlow, Northwich, Partington, Stockport (Hillgate), and Tintwistle; and even some of these have survived by a sort of accident—by the circumstance, I mean, of happening to possess ministers sufficiently strong in their orthodoxy to bear them across the critical period. We come then to this—that in 1772 there were at most six Independent churches in the county properly so called. And so far as one can gather, they were all weak and struggling. Dissent in general was very weak. During the long interval from 1717 to 1772 it had made no visible headway—rather it had gone back. One new chapel had been built—at Hale; but this was to take the place of Ringway, which had been seized by the Episcopalians. On the other hand, Middlewich (Presbyterian) had practically ceased to count, while the solitary "orthodox" light in the Wirral—the twilight of Brombrow and Upton—had

flickered out. In 1773 the Rev. John Chidlaw (minister of Crook Street, Chester) was the Cheshire correspondent of the London "committee appointed to manage the affairs and to take charge of the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters," and on July 24 he wrote—"The Dissenting interest in this county in general is in a very declining languishing state, and some of the congregations are likely to drop very soon. Congleton and Wheelock are at this time without ministers, and likely to be so, as there are very few to minister to." Nor can it be fairly said that the state of decay was less manifest in the "orthodox" than in the "Presbyterian" chapels. It was a complaint common to both, and due to a common cause, viz. lack of spiritual life. We are told in Tong's "Life of Matthew Henry" (1662-1714) that, besides ministering faithfully to his own church, "the towns and villages that lay near to Chester enjoyed a great share of his labors; in some of these he preached a monthly lecture, as at Mouldsworth, Grange, Bromborough, Elton, Saughton, and frequently at Beeston, Mickledale, and Peckfurton; he was often employed at Wrexham, Shocklidge, Burton, and Darnal; there was scarce a week but he was at one or more of these places, preaching the Gospel." There were, doubtless, other examples of evangelistic zeal—that of Robert Moseley (perhaps) of Ringway.<sup>1</sup> But they were not numerous, and grew less so as the century advanced. Cold Rationalism, in fact, vied with a frigid and sterile orthodoxy to reduce the pulse of spiritual life to its feeblest beat. Wesley and Whitefield had kindled a flame of "enthusiasm" in other parts of the land, and had visited Cheshire. But the influence of that movement had so far barely touched the "old dissent." This lay seemingly, and lay for long, at the point of death. What brought about a change for the better; what brought about the "revival" which, so far at least as the Independent churches were concerned, saved them from dissolution, led to their increase, and issued in the establishment of the Cheshire Union? To a great extent, the answer is given in the work of two men—Jonathan Scott and Job Wilson. A new faith, engendering a new evangelistic experience and zeal, was the inspiring motive in the work of both these pioneers. They found for themselves

<sup>1</sup> Urwick, p. 384.

that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and were urged by their discovery to a compassion for the unsaved which made of preaching an absorbing joy.

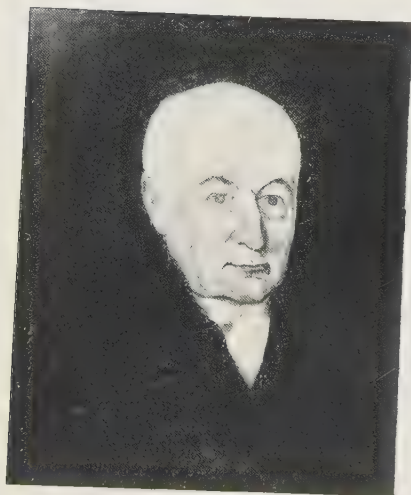
Jonathan Scott was born at Shrewsbury in 1735. His father was a captain in the army, and at the age of seventeen he also entered the army—becoming in due time a captain in the 7th Dragoons. His conversion came through the preaching of the saintly evangelical clergyman, Mr. Romaine, about the year 1766. He at once began to preach, and continued to do so till 1769, when he was called upon to choose between silence in the army and preaching out of it.<sup>1</sup> He chose the latter. Taking up his abode at Wollerton in Shropshire, he devoted himself to home missionary work. He visited Market Drayton, where he organised a church; Newport, where he built a chapel; Stoke-on-Trent, where, in 1773, he had a thousand hearers; Whitchurch, Newcastle, Nantwich, and various other places. The new cause at Chester owed much to him: so did that at Knutsford. In 1780 an invitation from two or three persons who heard him preach at Hanley brought him to Congleton, where, first, he fitted up at his own expense a room for worship, and then, in 1790, erected, again at his own expense, a chapel in Mill Street. Another sphere of his labours and generosity was Townley Street, Macclesfield, which he sustained through its first difficult years by unstinted service and financial aid. "The Lord's kindness in raising this congregation such a kind friend in the Rev. Mr. Scott, we hope will be gratefully remembered by us and our posterity," says the church-book. His title to be considered a "Rev." was secured to him in 1774 when "he was ordained at Lancaster to the office, not of settled Pastor, but of Presbyter or teacher at large." But "Captain" was the name by which he was most commonly known, both in his lifetime and since. And his truest ordination came from no human source. He was a minister by the grace of God—sealed by his labours abundant and their manifold fruits. None more humble, earnest, and zealous in the service of the Gospel than he! "For many years

<sup>1</sup> He did not doff (all at once) his military dress. Thus about 1770 "Captain Scott created no small stir by preaching in full regimentals in the open space near the Mill Brow Chapel," near Marple Bridge.





Rev. JONATHAN SCOTT  
("Captain" Scott).



Rev. JOB WILSON.





he was wont to travel much—frequently twenty miles on the Lord's Day—and to preach five or six times a week." What he did, moreover, was done gratuitously; and no worthy object appealed to him in vain. His last years—from 1802 to 1807—were spent at Nantwich with his second wife, Mrs. Barrow, widow of Samuel Barrow, and here the young minister of the infant Congregational church found in him an unfailing helper. He lived just long enough to see the "Cheshire Union" started on its beneficent career, and to further it by a contribution (on February 3, 1807) from Nantwich of £31, 14s. 2d. On May 28 he died, and "his remains were interred in a vault within Queen Street Chapel, Chester."

One of his best blessings to Cheshire was the gift, under God, of Job Wilson—for forty-three years pastor of the Congregational Church at Northwich.

He was born at Sowerby, near Halifax, on February 16, 1765. His parents attended the Nonconformist Chapel in the village, and "appear to have been on terms of intimacy" with the pastor. This connection became unwittingly an occasion of spiritual harm to the boy, who one day overheard the pastor say to a brother minister, in the privacy of confidential talk, "that there was not a person in his congregation who knew his real sentiments on religious subjects." He was, in fact, really an Arian or Socinian, but aimed in public to pass for orthodox; and the boy of seven, though he knew nothing of Arian or Socinian, was old enough to have a perception of what was honest and to be shocked by his minister's avowal of double-mindedness. It is said that he often referred to this early experience—no doubt for his own as well as others' admonition.

In 1785 he became a clerk in a mill at Ramsbottom belonging to Peel, Yates & Co. Two years later he married Miss Ann Rothwell, who, after a union of more than fifty years, still survived him.

For a little time he lived in Bury and attended the Presbyterian Chapel there—a chapel already tending to Unitarianism under its minister, John Hughes. But in 1788 he came under the influence of the Rev. W. Mann, minister at Dundee Chapel near Ramsbottom; and this, followed up by the yet more personal and penetrating influence of Abraham Hamer (a well-known

Christian layman of the district) wrought in him a complete change of mind and heart.

He began to preach, passing from "brief exhortations at prayer-meetings" to the occasional conduct of an entire service in some neighbouring village. "His first" (real) "sermon was preached in the pulpit of the Baptist Chapel at Accrington."

Presently, acting on the advice of friends, he resolved to give himself to the ministry altogether. He entered the Dissenting Academy at Northowram (sacred to the memory of Oliver Heywood), and may have had thoughts of taking the usual course of study, though his position as a married man made a difficulty. But at the end of a few weeks he quitted Northowram for Cheshire and study (to which he never felt himself adapted) for active pastoral work (which called forth his best powers).

"Captain" Scott was the means of his removal. He wanted a helper, and was told, on applying to the Academy, that Mr. Wilson seemed just the man for his purpose. Accordingly Mr. Scott engaged him, and soon had reason to thank God. This was in 1794. From a diary in which the young evangelist notes down the leading events of his first months in Cheshire, it appears that Macclesfield was the centre of his work for a year or so. He arrived there on March 14—a Sunday. His hope had been to arrive on the Saturday, but he reached Manchester too late for the Macclesfield coach. So he stayed the night with a friend, and on Sunday morning left by coach for Macclesfield at five o'clock. This is what he writes: "We came away well to Stockport. After Stockport to Bullock Smithy the road was very bad with snow. A little after we were stopped with a waggon in the road, the snow being from hedge to hedge. We were ordered out of the coach. Finding my time was expired I set out on foot, and, thro' mercey, arrived in time, tho' the road was mostly full of snow." "He conducted the services of the day" (no doubt at Townley Street)—"a very good congregation in the evening, and then presided over a church meeting which was long and important." No wonder his last entry for the day was, "Find my poor body very ill tired this night."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From lecture by Rev. F. Carter, who has had the diary in his hands and quotes several interesting passages.

While making Macclesfield his home, and often, along with Mr. Scott, serving the church at Townley Street—which at that time had no minister—much of his time was spent in itinerant labour. “He moved from place to place, spending a few weeks in the different towns or villages whither he came. In this way Congleton, Leek, Nantwich, Middlewich, Gawsorth, &c.,” were brought into contact with his fervent spirit. One of the places which attracted him was Northwich. Here he passed four or five weeks in the summer of his first year—1794. Not unlikely the attraction lay in the extreme poverty—spiritual and otherwise—of the people, a mere handful, meeting in a “small and singularly inconvenient chapel.” Such faith as his would be apt to see “pools of water” even in the desert. At any rate, in June 1795 the invitation of the church prevailed upon him, and henceforth Northwich became his home. Something is said elsewhere of what he did for this his central sphere. It is enough here to emphasise the fact that he did, and loved to do, the work of an evangelist as long as his strength held out. “Every Sunday saw him, for many years, travelling to Middlewich to preach after the service in his own chapel.” But his Sundays were merely the introduction to a full week of kindred labour in other places, as the following extract from “a paper left behind him” makes clear: “During the following three months” (of a year unspecified) “I preached seventy-five sermons, and travelled about nine hundred miles, mostly on foot. On the 21st of August I preached at Northwich, on the 23rd and 24th at Tattenhall, on the 25th at Nantwich, 26th at Over, 28th at home, and on the two following Sabbaths. Then on the 5th of September at Sandbach, on the 6th at Schollow Green, 21st at Brookhouse Green, 22nd at Over, and 25th at home. Week following preached at Knutsford, Pickmere, and Northwich on the week-days, and at Tattenhall on the Sabbath, three sermons; also on Monday the 3rd at Bosley, at Yewtree on the 4th, at Tattenhall on the 5th, at Over on the 6th, at New Church on the 7th, and on the 9th (Sabbath) three times at home. On the 13th at Goostrey, on the 16th at Leek, on the 17th at Schollow Green, 18th at Brookhouse Green, 19th at Sandbach, 20th at Over, 21st at New Church. This was my ordinary course for several years, and I have good reason to

be thankful to God for the health and strength which it pleased Him to grant to such an unworthy Rambler. I often long to have again some of those warm seasons; we certainly were, at some of them, favoured with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Mr. Wilson did what he could, in this way, to bring light into "the dark and unevangelized parts of the county"; but his experience brought home to him how little one man could possibly do singlehanded and how much might be gained if the Churches united to carry on the same sort of work collectively. This thought was strongly upon his mind when, in September 1806, a number of the neighbouring ministers met at Northwich to congratulate Mr. Wilson on the opening of his new chapel. It furnished an opportunity not to be let slip, and so—to quote his own words—"In the afternoon of that day (September 25, 1806) the idea of a county union was suggested." The idea was welcomed, and soon began to take shape—for which Mr. Wilson felt deeply grateful. "It is utterly impossible for me to express the feelings with which I attended our first county meeting, which was held at Macclesfield on the 5th of November 1806." He was writing after the lapse of many years, and looking back he adds: "By the labours of the Union, some thousands have been brought to hear words by which they may be saved, and about twenty houses for prayer and praise have been erected. Many, both ministers and friends, who united their hands and hearts with our's in this work, are now no more. O that God may raise up others in their places!"

We shall not be wrong then if we couple "Captain" Scott and Job Wilson together as forerunners of that Association whose primary object was, like theirs, evangelistic.

## II.—GENERAL SURVEY OF THE UNION'S WORK AND GROWTH

### THE CHESHIRE UNION, 1806-1906

THE fact just noted that the primary object of this Union was evangelistic distinguishes it not only from the Associations of 1653 and 1691, but also from that which originated among "Congregational Churches in Lancashire and its vicinity" in 1786. The promoters of this last met at Bolton on the 7th of June 1786, and subscribed the following propositions:—

- "(1) That this Association shall include the different" (Congregational) "churches in the said counties" (*i.e.* Lancashire and other neighbouring counties) "represented by their respective pastors and a messenger from, and to be chosen by, every church.
- "(2) That it shall be founded on a general harmony of worship and order, together with a suitable agreement of our views of evangelical doctrine, as maintained by the reformed churches.
- "(3) That an annual meeting be held in the month of June, at any place within our boundaries, to be previously appointed, when a minister shall be chosen by the majority as chairman, to regulate the conversation, and receive proposals for the advancement of the common interest, and also to open the next annual meeting by preaching a sermon adapted to the occasion.
- "(4) That although it be not the intention of this Association to infringe in the least upon the liberties of Christian Churches, or to usurp any authority over them, we notwithstanding look upon ourselves as bound to give our advice to any minister, messenger, or member—delegated



by any church within our connexion—or consult with them concerning their peace and order, or in any case wherein the interest of their church is concerned.

- “(5) That if any application for advice should be made, and a proper knowledge of circumstances is not immediately attainable, then a committee, consisting of four or five members of different churches, shall be appointed by the consulting party and the members of the Association, to make inquiry concerning the several circumstances required; and that the committee do give information to the next annual meeting what is the result thereof. *N.B.*—This proposition is to be understood as applicable to all cases where immediate information cannot be had.

- “(6) That any, who is a member of this Association, being found to have departed from the doctrines held forth by it into erroneous tenets, or guilty of sinful practices, shall be suspended from being an associate; but if a future amendment and genuine repentance be manifest, the same person is again admissible.”

Plainly the Association was a feeble copy of the earlier “classis”—intended for mutual discipline and edification. A new departure was made in 1801 when a circular emanating from a meeting of the Association<sup>1</sup> and dated Manchester, July 1st, was addressed to “the Independent Churches in Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire.” It set forth “a plan of the *Itinerant Society*” already formed by ministers belonging to “the contiguous parts” of these three counties. The Society’s General Committee was to consist of the ministers and approved members of their respective churches. There was to be an itinerant who should “devote himself entirely to the promulgation of the Gospel in the circuit where he may be appointed to labour”; and who

<sup>1</sup> See Slate’s “Brief History . . . of the Lancashire . . . Union,” p. 5. But Mr. Nightingale in his “Story of the Lancashire Union” (p. 16) speaks of the “circular” as emanating from a NEW Association formed at Tintwistle (Cheshire) on Wednesday, August 22, 1798. The statement is no doubt based on knowledge, though Mr. Slate’s ignorance of the break in continuity seems unlikely as well as the breach itself. Mr. Nightingale names four Cheshire members of this Association—Robert Anlezark, Orchard Street, Stockport; Joseph Batley, Marple; William Hudson, Tintwistle; John Meldrum, Hatherlow.

should "communicate an account of his proceedings and prospects to the secretary once a month at least." The associated ministers, moreover, were in rotation to "visit the itinerant once in three months and preach round the circuit with him, or as much of it as might be convenient, and transmit the state of the mission to the secretary; the expenses of such visits to be paid, if required, from the general fund." While as to this fund, the ministers were to keep it supplied "by public collections or private subscriptions" from "their respective congregations." The secretary was Rev. W. Roby, of Grosvenor Street Church, who gave his heart to the movement and helped it not only by his secretarial efficiency but also by his gratuitous training of young men in what became known as Roby's Academy (1803-9). Cheshire members of "the Itinerant Society" were Rev. W. Hudson of Tintwistle, whose people gave £25 to its fund in 1801; Mr. Brown of Stockport, who gave £1, 1s. in 1802; Rev. W. Evans, of Orchard Street, who contributed £2 in 1805; and Rev. Solomon Ashton, of the old (Tabernacle) Chapel (one of Mr. Roby's "young men") whose people contributed £5, 8s. 6d. in the same year.

The Rev. W. Honeywood, the itinerant engaged, worked with considerable success in the western part of Lancashire, assisted by the gratuitous service of Mr. Hacking. He was succeeded by Mr. George Greatbatch in the autumn of 1802, but it became a question in 1804 if the society could continue his modest stipend of £80, "owing to the low state of the finances." This called forth a second circular letter urging "the importance of the object" and describing what had been done. Then, in the same year 1805, a third letter traced the principal cause of failure in "the want of a well-adjusted Union of our Churches." "Whilst the Methodists have raised respectable interests in the most unpromising places, we, being insulated, and not acting properly in concert, have attempted, and, of course, effected but little in the enlargement of Christ's Empire."

It is noted as a hopeful sign that "many of our ministers throughout the kingdom are firmly convinced of the importance of a Union of Independent Churches." An enthusiastic meeting,

held in London "in the last Missionary week," showed this clearly. Some of the Lancashire ministers attended that meeting and came back resolved to follow up its proposals. Accordingly at the annual assembly of the Association (the Association of 1786 of which the "Itinerant Society" was a branch?) two resolutions were unanimously passed, after an impartial discussion:—(1) "That a General Union of the ministers and congregations of the Independent denomination, in order to promote the spread of the Gospel, appears highly desirable;" (2) "That a committee, composed of Messrs. Spear, Heron, Lees, W. Kay, Bradley, Blackburn, Evans, and Roby, be appointed to prepare a plan of union." The suggested rules drawn up by this committee were approved at two sectional meetings held, the one at Wharton near Bolton, the other at Tintwistle, in Cheshire; were then circulated in a letter dated Manchester, August 11, 1806; and finally adopted at a general meeting in the vestry of Mosley Street Chapel, Manchester, on September 23, when the Lancashire Union of Independent Churches was formed. In addition to the twenty-four Lancashire ministers who joined the Union there and then eight others also "signified their approbation"—one from Derbyshire, Rev. John Whitehead, Charlesworth; one from Yorkshire, Rev. Noah Blackburn, Delph; and six from Cheshire, Revs. Solomon Ashton and William Evans, Stockport; J. Batley,<sup>1</sup> Marple; W. Hudson, Tintwistle; Ebenezer White, Chester; Job Wilson, Northwich. Two days later (September 25) some of these Cheshire ministers at least—perhaps all—were present at the opening of Mr. Wilson's new chapel; and in the afternoon had that memorable talk which brought about the decision to establish, if possible, a Union for Cheshire only. This decision was sent on to the Secretary of the Lancashire Union and came before the first meeting of its committee in Manchester, October 22, when it was resolved—"That in consequence of several ministers in the county of Chester having intimated that a separate Union in that county would tend more to the spread of the Gospel, it be recommended to them to form themselves into a distinct Union."

Accordingly, a meeting of ministers and delegates from a

<sup>1</sup> Marple Bridge is meant, which is really in Derbyshire.

majority of the congregations in the county took place at Macclesfield on November 5, 1806, and came to the following resolutions: "That as a Union of the Christian ministers and congregations in the county appears desirable, we now solemnly and affectionately unite ourselves, in the name and presence of our Lord Jesus, as fellow subjects of his kingdom, to promote his glory and the salvation of our fellow sinners;" "that the chief object of this Union" shall "be the spread of the Gospel in the unevangelised parts of the county by means of itinerant preaching"; and that it shall not "interfere with the rights or discipline of particular churches," nor shall any "grievance be brought by any church or minister before the Association." We have here the clear statement of an essential difference from its predecessors and one which has on the whole been jealously guarded. As regards organisation and management the principal rules were these, that the executive committee shall consist of "each minister with one or two lay brethren of every congregation"; that any seven of the above number shall "be fully empowered to act";<sup>1</sup> that the Union shall meet twice a year (in April and September) and the ministers and delegates shall hold themselves bound to attend at each meeting; that extra meetings shall usually be held at Northwich as the most central spot; that the ordinary meetings shall go the round of the churches successively, and that the usual order at these shall be "public preaching on the first evening; the next day to be devoted to business, and, if expedient, preaching in the evening. Every meeting for business to begin and end with prayer." There were to be two treasurers, two secretaries, two auditors; and the accounts were to be audited on the first evening of each general meeting. Rules with reference to the specific object of the Union, provided that no Itinerant shall be chosen who has not been "previously heard and approved of at a general meeting"; that "the expences incurred by either of the secretaries or any minister in the county" through going to visit the Itinerancy shall be defrayed out of the fund; and that "no expence exceeding £5 shall be incurred in fitting up any new place of worship without first obtaining leave of the Committee of the Union."

<sup>1</sup> By 1808 it was realised that this minimum must be increased.

A list of the ministers and delegates who entered into the Union at this first meeting was printed with the Rules, and is worth reproducing :—

| PLACE.                        | MINISTER.              | DELEGATES.                      |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Stockport . . .               | Evans . .              | { Brown,<br>Jackson.            |
| Stockport, Old Chapel .       | Ashton . .             | { Dawson,<br>Joseph Howard.     |
| Macclesfield . . .            | Browning . .           | { Ed. Roberts,<br>Jno. Johnson. |
| Congleton . . .               | Bennet . .             | { Heath,<br>Broadhurst.         |
| Northwich and<br>Middlewich } | Wilson . .             | Wm. Hitchin.                    |
| Nantwich . . .                | { Scott and<br>James } | Thursfield.                     |
| Chester . . .                 | White . .              | { Jones,<br>Williamson.         |
| Wrexham . . .                 | Lewis . .              | { Brown,<br>A. Thomely.         |

Of five others—Tintwistle (Hudson), Hatherlow (Meldrum), Duckinfield (Marsh), Gatley (Handforth), Knutsford (Hulme), it is said that neither minister nor delegates attended the meeting ; but that the majority of them will doubtless join in due course—a hope realised almost immediately, except in the case of Hatherlow.

The officials agreed upon were elected on the same occasion, viz.—the Secretaries : Revs. Ebenezer White, Chester, and William Evans, Stockport. Treasurers : Messrs. G. Brown, Stockport, and Thomas Jones of Chester. Auditors : Messrs. John Jackson, Stockport ; John Johnson, Macclesfield, and William Hitchin, Middlewich.

A week later (November 13) one of the secretaries, Mr. Evans, issued an appeal to all Cheshire Congregationalists, explaining and commending the new movement. According to Mr. Evans himself the appeal evoked serious attention everywhere and a liberal response.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His sermon of September 17, 1807.



The Union held its second meeting at Nantwich on February the 3rd, 1807, and its third at Northwich on September the 17th. 1807. Mr. Evans preached on the latter occasion, and his sermon has been preserved. It bears the title, "Encouragements to Exertion for the Spread of the Gospel"; and is preceded by a dedicatory address to "the ministers and delegates composing the Cheshire Union, and the churches and congregations which they severally represent."

From the latter we learn that there are two Itinerants at work—Mr. Silvester, the one first engaged, who has "now laboured nearly six months in the neighbourhood of Sandbach"; the other "Mr. John James, a young man of considerable learning, approved piety and tried prudence," who has been set down "in the hundred of Wirral."<sup>1</sup> Three places—"Audlem, Tattenhall, and Minshull—have applied for aid," *i.e.* for preachers; "and at Runcorn also—a populous village and a bathing-place of considerable resort in the season—an opening has been made and a new place is nearly ready for accommodating a congregation."

On October 15, 1808, Mr. Evans wrote his first report,<sup>2</sup> from 1808. which it appears that a third Itinerant, Mr. Robert Niel, late of Idle Academy, has been obtained—making Middlewich his centre. Mr. James, on the other hand, has left the Wirral, and another is being sought to take his place.

Operations have been spreading rapidly. Mr. Silvester has busied himself not only at Sandbach but at Haslington, Marchfield, Copenhall Moss, Brookhouse Green, Minshull Hill. Mr. Niel takes services (alternately with the Rev. J. Turner of Knutsford) at Peover as well as Middlewich. There are encouraging congregations at Tattenhall and Parkgate; and at Lawton salt works a house licensed for preaching by "a respectable friend" has been opened (on June 7, 1808) by Mr. Bennett, of Congleton. The general result is that "in the places above mentioned there are several hundred souls who, little more than twelve months ago, were deplorably ignorant" and "attended no place of worship whatever"; but who now "are regular and attentive

<sup>1</sup> "He heretofore preached . . . at Nantwich and Audlem." At Nantwich he had been Captain Scott's colleague.

<sup>2</sup> "Price 4d. The profits to go into the fund."



hearers of the Gospel of Salvation." Children, moreover, as well as adults have been considered. Sunday Schools here and there have sprung up—at Haslington, for instance. And it is urged as something "not only desirable but of the greatest consequence to encourage the establishment of Sunday Schools in every likely situation."

1809. The second report—dated November 18, 1809—shows a still widening field. An open door has lately been found in the "populous village of Over"; and a "preaching-station" has been set up at Newton (near Hyde) by "our brother Bennett of Duckinfield"—while as to the places already occupied, Parkgate has become of sufficient strength to call for a regular minister—Mr. Foster, late of Cheshunt College—and the others are doing well. Mr. Evans did not write his third report till

1811. October 29, 1811, and made it a leisurely document of 21 pages—mostly occupied with obituary notices.<sup>1</sup> He has been visiting the Stations and reviews them in geographical order—hastening gladly from the Wirral—that "dreary spot" where "little hitherto has been done"—to the "more fruitful fields" of Tattenhall and its neighbourhood. Then, crossing "the forest of Delamere" to Middlewich and Peover, he proceeded to Over, and, a few miles farther on, to Minshull—whence, "in a south-easterly direction" he reaches Marchfield and finally Haslington and Sandbach. He has often done the same round—in fact has done it "several times each year"—and testifies to having "found that the state of things has ever rather exceeded the statements in the Itinerant's letters than fallen short of them."

The Itinerancy has, indeed, yielded a rich return for the labour and money bestowed upon it. But this is not all. It has reacted with blessing upon the churches. "The happy effects of the Union are not confined to the circuits of our itinerants; they extend on all sides; they animate your ministers—they enliven and cheer and delight every congregation in the country." Mr. Evans wrote his fourth and last report on January

1813. 9, 1813. Here we find that Parkgate and the Wirral have

<sup>1</sup> One of these refers to the death of his co-secretary, Rev. Ebenezer White—whose prolonged ill-health explains why Mr. Evans had been left to do all the work.

lost Mr. Foster; and have been handed over to "a worthy and zealous friend in Chester," who has undertaken to obtain a suitable minister. For the rest, Mr. Thomas Hitchin (the successor of Mr. James) at Tattenhall and its vicinity; also Mr. Silvester, and Mr. Niel, in their respective spheres, are more than holding their own; while "at Goostrey a worthy and respectable friend residing in London has furnished us with a fresh" preaching-place. Mr. Evans died on September 29, 1814, and Mr. Turner (of Knutsford) observes<sup>1</sup> that his loss, together with that of other early leaders, told against the prosperity of the Union. This is made evident by the character of the reports<sup>2</sup> and the lapse of contributions. There are few signs of advance between 1814 1814-1820. and 1820, though the work in old stations is fairly well maintained. Mr. Silvester extends his services to Brereton; in 1814 a movement at Hyde Lane (the beginning of Union Street Chapel, Hyde), superintended by Brother Bennett of Hatherlow, "claims acknowledgment"; from May 1814 public worship begins to be held in "the well-known chapel at Boughton," formerly "occupied by the Rev. Philip Oliver," and recently "purchased by the generous zeal of one of our friends"; in 1816 Malpas, started two years before by the Rev. James Pridie, comes on the scene, and is mentioned as being well sustained by "the benevolent exertions of the Revd. Messrs. Harris and Reynolds"; Gatley, also, appears for the first time in 1820 as a *protégé* of the Union under Mr. T. Chesters, who devotes himself likewise to the neighbouring villages of Heaton (Mersey), Cheadle Hulme, Long Lane, Hey Head, and Hale Barns; while, in the same year, Tattenhall, under the Rev. John Morris, who has succeeded "brother Thomas Hitchin," is able to declare itself independent.

But, on the whole, the Union is in a bad way. "In the year 1820 1820. its remaining friends held a meeting at Over, without treasurer or secretary or other official person to take the lead in its proceedings"; and as one clear step towards a better state of things, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> In his Jubilee sketch of the Union.

<sup>2</sup> The fifth (dated July 1814) was written by Rev. John Reynolds of Chester; the sixth (not extant) by Rev. Jas. Turner; the seventh (dated November 3, 1816) by Rev. Nathanael Pugsley; the eighth (dated October 1820) by "the Committee."

Turner—who records the fact—“was taken by violence and forced into the office of secretary.” This office, accepted thus unwillingly, was faithfully retained for more than twenty years. The ninth  
 1822. report, written by the new secretary, is dated November 1822. It contains nothing fresh beyond the statements that “a door has been opened” recently for Mr. Silvester into Wheelock; that Gatley has annexed Styal, where “an opulent and respectable individual has erected a chapel”; and that the Union has resumed its interest in Hyde, where Mr. Oram “has consented for the present to labour.” The tenth Report, signed by John  
 1829. Thorpe, was delayed till April 27, 1829. It announces that Hyde, Gatley, and Sandbach have gone off, and that Middlewich is just going off, the Union’s fund; that Duckinfield (Providence Chapel) has “for some time past enjoyed” the benefit of it; and that Bullock Smithy (*i.e.* Hazel Grove) has been “more or less connected with the Union for several years.” But the keynote is depression. “Grief and humiliation” are what seem fitting in view of the present as compared with the first state of the Union. Great are the opportunities if they were but met by adequate liberality and zeal. “Amidst the teeming population of the eastern division of the county, in the wide and rapidly increasing district of Wirral—including Parkgate, Neston, Sutton, Tranmere, Birkenhead, Woodside, and Seacombe; and again at several places more towards the centre of the county, openings for the publication of the Gospel by itinerant preaching might be immediately obtained.” What hinders? Alas, there is hindrance enough in the mere fact that money is lacking. In the early days “it was usual for a large balance to remain in the hands of the treasurers, Messrs. Jones and Brown, a state of things . . . which has long ceased to exist. In those days a new sphere of labour might be entered upon without hesitation . . . but of late we have been compelled to have recourse to a narrow and cramping economy, which has necessarily rendered our movements less vigorous and decisive.” “Let us rouse ourselves to increased efforts.” There is no sign that increased efforts were made. As appears from the eleventh report—which came out  
 1834. after a gap of five years<sup>1</sup>—in 1834, four old cases were still

<sup>1</sup> April 23, 1834, signed T. Cass Potter, G. Barrow Kidd.

receiving assistance (Over, Malpas, Duckinfield, and Bullock Smithy), and four new cases had been taken up (Congleton, Sutton, Bucklow Hill, and Runcorn). But the progress implied was very small; and the writers are inclined to find the cause not so much in lack of money as in lack of unity among the ministers. They remain too much closed up in their own sphere of labour; they do not exchange with one another often enough; they do not keep alive their sympathy with the work of the Union by visiting those places where it is done, or most needs to be done. The suggestion is "thrown out" that, without neglecting their own congregations, *all* the ministers should unite to "fill the county with a vigorous itinerancy," and that the "funds of the Union" should bear the expense. It was a counsel of perfection which came to nothing.

We see by the thirteenth report,<sup>1</sup> dated April 1840, and written 1840. by Mr. Turner, that Over has ceased to need help; that the Union no longer supports "a stated labourer" at Malpas except partially; and that it is aiding a new cause at Altrincham which promises great things. We see, too, by the next report—issued in 1842—1842. that the stations are as before: Hazel Grove, Altrincham, Bucklow Hill, Malpas, Parkgate; and that Messrs. Pugsley (of Stockport) and Bennett (of Hatherlow) for the northern part of the county, as likewise Messrs. Kidd (of Macclesfield) and Luke (of Chester) for the southern part, have been on deputation work—visiting all the churches and striving their utmost to kindle enthusiasm. But though "everywhere cordially welcomed," the financial result has been disappointing. The year has closed with a large sum due to the treasurer; and aggressiveness to any marked extent has been impossible. The Union, *e.g.*, would have been glad to settle an "agent" in "that densely populated place"—Hollingworth, where "the teachers and friends of the Tintwistle Branch School" are doing so good a work; but has had to content itself with making a small grant instead! Five years pass (with no report), and then on June 28, 1847, we come to this: 1847. "An appeal on behalf of the Cheshire Union to the ministers and members of the Congregational body within the county of Chester." Written by S. Bowen, R. G. Milne, and J. T. Jesson, at "the

<sup>1</sup> The twelfth, which supplied "information" up to September 1838, is missing.

urgent wish of the ministers and delegates," it begins: "Christian Brethren,—What shall be done? Shall the Cheshire Union be dissolved? draw on a languid existence? or shall it, with hearty good-will, be vigorously sustained and extended in its operations? On you, beloved brethren, the answer devolves, and for that answer we look with high and earnest expectation." The appeal then reviews the past successes of the Union, its present aspects, and its immediate exigencies. The Union has been in existence forty-one years; has been faithful throughout to "its leading and fundamental designs—viz., the evangelization of the darker districts of the county, and the assistance of churches too feeble to sustain their own pastorate"; and it has been visibly blessed. "The Union has either wholly or partially maintained, besides outposts, eighteen principal stations"—served by devoted brethren to whose labours has been mainly due the fact that "since the formation of the Union the Congregational Body has been more than doubled within the limits of the county," and that fourteen chapels "have been erected at a cost of at least £7000"—to say nothing of specifically spiritual results.

At the present time there are five churches, Hazel Grove, Parkgate, Malpas, Bucklow Hill, and Wilmslow, which receive "pecuniary grants." "From these localities highly encouraging reports were received at our last meeting"—from Wilmslow especially; and now "a large field also presents itself to us at Crewe, where a few spirited friends of the Union" have already erected a chapel. "Other spheres," moreover, "equally accessible and promising, invite our notice, but, with our present funds, enter them we cannot." It is all a question of money. The Union is pledged to grants which necessitate an annual revenue of at least £210; it has received between May 1846 and May 1847 only £184—inclusive of "two items, amounting together to £51, which cannot be reckoned among the permanent sources of supply." "Here then is our difficulty. We must master it, else it must master us. What, Brethren, shall be done? Let the wise, the wealthy, the liberal, and the devout amongst you ponder the question, and decide upon it." There is (say the writers) one sure remedy if these churches will but apply it. Let the thirty-seven Independent churches of the county "but



make their contributions from year to year regularly and systematically," then "without the least increasing, individually, the sum of present contributions," all present exigencies could be met. As a matter of fact, however, "scarcely twelve" of the churches "contribute *regularly* to the Income of the Union." Does this mean apathy? To some extent, "yes." But more generally it means a supposed lack of ability. Many—both churches and individuals—do not give because they fancy they cannot afford to give. Let them, however, consider the apostolic rule—"upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him;" "let each of the 12,000 Congregationalists adopt the simple plan there propounded by Paul, of dedicating to the cause of Christ on His day, an offering somewhat proportionate to the receipts and resources of the preceding week: let him assign from these Sabbath-day contributions but *one penny* per quarter to the revenues of the Union, and apart from legacies, annual subscriptions, or collections, we should realise the annual sum of £200. Shall this be done? Our hope is that many will be induced to practise the hint. For the pence of our artisans, agriculturists, and domestics, as well as for the pounds of the affluent, we put in an earnest plea. 'These pennies,' said one, 'are destined to move the world.' We have faith in the prediction." Anyhow, let all the churches contribute and do so regularly. There are congregations "which, from the commencement of the Union, have invariably observed the Anniversary Sabbath; which, whether 'in the day of small things,' or of spiritual prosperity . . . have never omitted their yearly tribute." Why not all? In fine, "What shall be done? We wait your reply with deep interest. Shall it be that given by the early fathers of the Church, 'We will not say great things; we will do them'?"

This was in June 1847. In the previous April the financial statement showed a deficit of £79, 15s. 4d.—income £184, expenditure £263, 15s. 6d. There had been adverse balances before, but none so large. Nor had the income ever been quite so small. How great a drop from the early days when it could be said "that the generosity of the friends of the Gospel has kept pace with our extended exertions and opening prospects!" On

1847.  
Financial  
review.

September 6, 1809, *e.g.* after meeting all obligations up to that date, there remained in the treasurer's hands £253, 16s. 11d. Well might the secretary exclaim, "When we reflect upon the small number of congregations in our county and the situation which most of their members occupy—together with the difficulties under which our commercial interests labour—what has been done excites our astonishment as much as our gratitude and joy." True there comes too soon a falling off—severely rebuked by the vigilant secretary. "The fund is still in an encouraging state," writes Mr. Evans, January 9, 1813, "but we state, with great regret, that several congregations have been very negligent. For the last three years, or nearly, we have had no pecuniary aid from Tintwistle, Congleton, or Northwich. Shall we praise them for this? We praise them not. Should this cold spirit prevail and extend itself into other places, the Cheshire Union may soon be expected to expire." The immediate result of this sharp reprimand does not appear, as no statement of accounts was printed with the 1813 and 1814 reports. But the statement for the eighteen months ending October 1816 is satisfactory enough<sup>1</sup>—Income £626, os. 2½d., expenditure £590, 19s. 3d., leaving balance in hand of £27, os. 11½d. Then begins a series of deficits which—with one exception<sup>2</sup>—goes on for forty years.<sup>3</sup> The 1820 report finds one cause of the deficiency—possibly the main cause—in the reduced number of personal contributors,<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, prays for others to take their place. "Several of the most liberal contributors to the funds of the Union have been taken away by death. May the Lord raise up others among you who shall be like-minded. . . . Our friends in Chester have set an excellent example, in this respect, by reviving and extending, among themselves, the plan of annual subscriptions,<sup>5</sup> in addition to the usual public collection."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> £31, 2s. 4d. had been raised at Stockport, Macclesfield, and Tintwistle by penny-a-week societies.

<sup>2</sup> 1832-33.

<sup>3</sup> The next balance to the good is not till 1857-58.

<sup>4</sup> In 1816 £105, 14s. may be ascribed to these; in 1819-20 £39, 1s.

<sup>5</sup> These amounted to £25.

<sup>6</sup> Another excellent example is commended to the notice of "our county friends"—that of "the friend to our County Missionary Society who gives it the benefit of his two fruitful cherry-trees"!

To no small extent the advice took effect: Chester was followed by Congleton, Knutsford, Townley Street and Roe Street (Macclesfield), Nantwich, Tintwistle, &c. Indeed, the personal contributions went up surprisingly. For 1820 they were £55, 13s.; for 1821, £40, 3s.; for 1827, £81, 5s. 8d.;<sup>1</sup> for 1838, £100, 18s.; for 1840, £83, 16s. 6½d.; and even for 1846 (the year preceding this appeal) £60, 16s. 8d.<sup>2</sup> The fair inference seems to be that the root of the trouble lay where the "appeal" placed its finger, viz., in the many churches which had no collection, or had one only now and then. Nor, in fact, did the balance dip to the right side until the Union could rely upon the regular support of the churches generally.

Before the appearance of the next report in 1849 a meeting held at Crewe (Thursday, April 27, 1848) had again revised the Rules<sup>3</sup>; and some of the alterations made reflect clearly the teaching of experience. Thus the Union is to consist no longer of *all* the congregations of the county, but only of such as shall make "an annual collection in aid of its funds"; and any that are "reported at two annual meetings as having sent no contributions, notwithstanding application having been duly made for the same by the district secretary, shall be considered to have withdrawn." Again, the object of the Union is enlarged from the mere evangelising of the country by itinerants to "diffusion of Christianity in connection with congregational principles" by means of preaching in neglected districts, and of aid imparted "to churches requiring pecuniary assistance"; and so the vaguer name of "Cheshire Union" becomes "The Cheshire Home Missionary Society."

Another change abolishes the autumnal meeting of the General Committee or Conference,<sup>4</sup> but for closer supervision of the stations this Committee is "divided into two District

<sup>1</sup> Among the items is £16, 16s. 1d. from Ladies' Penny-a-Week Association, Tintwistle.

<sup>2</sup> In one or two cases collections and subscriptions are not distinguished—these are not reckoned.

<sup>3</sup> There had been a revisal in September 1825 (at Over). See Appendix VII.

<sup>4</sup> Note that what is now the "Assembly" was still the General Committee or Conference. Its composition is the same as before, only collectors of penny subscriptions are dropped.

Committees—a northern and southern; the former to include those members who reside in the northern division of the county, and the latter those in the southern.”

The rules for these District Committees are precise; and there is generally an evident intention to make the working of the Society more thorough and business-like. Thus, the order of proceedings for the annual meeting includes for the first time the item, “elect Chairman.” One may assume that there had been a Chairman at every such meeting; but this is the first reference to him. For the first time, too, one of the rules provides that “the report of the General Secretary and the Treasurer’s account shall be annually published after the revision and approval of the annual meeting.” Noticeable, also, is the fact that the Committee ceases from the old custom of nominating preachers for the annual meeting, and leaves “public services in connection with district or general meetings” in the hands of local friends and the secretaries.

The first meeting under these rules took place at Sandbach, Mr. Dutton, of Middlewich, in the Chair; and one of its first resolutions was that copies of the rules be printed and circulated throughout the churches to the number of six or seven hundred. The report submitted to this meeting, besides its summary of facts relating to the aided congregations, has some interesting remarks. Thus, it refers to the first district meetings in October last—the one held at Hatherlow for the North,<sup>1</sup> and the other at Minshull for the South.<sup>2</sup> “At each of these meetings the attendance was encouraging, and the spirit fraternal and affectionate.” Reports were received from the different stations; several resolutions were agreed upon; “and each meeting appointed deputations to visit all the places within their respective districts that are receiving aid from your Society.” It refers, also, to the desire expressed “by many of the friends of the Society” that the annual reports should embody a more detailed, not to say inquisitorial, account of the places concerned. “Some of the brethren have very strong objections to this ‘numbering of the people.’” “We say, not without cause.” “It is liable to much abuse; tend-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Coward (Hatherlow), Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Jesson (Runcorn), Secretary.

ing, possibly, to engender a mere proselytising spirit, and to form the habit of judging of the religious and spiritual prosperity of the churches from these external, not to say carnal, things"—*i.e.* statistics. It refers, further, to the fact that, for the present, the Society has no itinerant, *i.e.* no "single minister or agent under its own immediate control." This has come about by a natural and desirable operation of its method. For its method has been first to engage an itinerant for work in some dark neighbourhood, making some one place his centre in the hope that sooner or later a church might be gathered here which, with its "auxiliary" stations, should be sufficient to "require and occupy" the whole of his time. Then, or meanwhile, itinerants have been sent out in other directions to aim at a similar result. It is therefore mentioned as a reason for congratulation that such a result has been attained in all the places "now receiving aid." In them all—with one exception (Crewe)—"there are churches formed, and formed upon Congregational principles; they manage their own affairs, uncontrolled by any authoritative power from without." The method is clear and the aim commendable; though one may question if it quite answers to the original purpose of the Society as cherished by Mr. Evans and Mr. Job Wilson, for example. The watchword with them was rather evangelisation for its own sake. And of course the danger of the new method lay in the temptation to employ the funds merely for the maintenance of weak churches already established, neglecting evangelisation altogether. Experience shows that this danger has by no means been escaped.

For the next few years the reports add little of any material value to the story beyond what is said about the aided churches. These remain much the same in number and condition; but Sutton is suddenly dropped<sup>1</sup> in 1851; Wilmslow, after five years' "support," finds itself strong enough to go alone in 1852; Crewe joins hands with Haslington in 1855; and there are curious fluctuations of relationship between Hollingworth, Mottram, and Newton.

Prominent ministers about this time were Mr. Milne (Tintwistle), Mr. Christopherson (Bowdon), and Mr. Knill (Queen

<sup>1</sup> Resolved that "the meeting pass on to the next case."



Street, Chester). On one occasion (1850) Mr. Milne brought forward a motion—to refuse any grant where the minister did not receive £80 a year—which was shelved rather rudely: “Resolved that the meeting proceed to the order of the day.” On another (1853) he gave notice of one which he did not follow up—viz. that grants be on a graduated scale, *i.e.* proportionate to the contributions from assisted churches. Evidently the disposal of the society’s money did not altogether satisfy him. In 1856, however, he had better success. Mr. Dutton had wished (in 1854) to restore the system of half-yearly meetings on the ground that the Assembly, by meeting just once a year, lost touch with things. Mr. Milne sympathised, but proposed an alternative to which Mr. Dutton agreed. This was to form a Standing Executive Committee whose function it should be to take the oversight of stations, to consider and recommend grants, and to prepare business for the annual meeting. Having notified a motion to this effect in 1855, together with a motion that the society resume its former name of “Cheshire Union,” both were carried in 1856, and the committee (six ministers and three laymen) nominated at the same time. Thus there came about a constitutional change which has had very important and beneficial results—more so, probably, than its author could foresee. Mr. Knill was a “revivalist” as well as much more; and in 1855 the society thankfully welcomed his offer to spend a month in the summer among the churches preaching five days a week, Sundays excepted.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Christopherson, for his part, was the means of introducing what has become substantially the established custom of all the annual meetings. He proposed (1851) that “on the evening of the day preceding the day of business a sermon should be preached by a minister chosen by the Church in time for announcement in the circular, and on the evening of the day of business a public meeting should be held for conferences and the receiving of agents’ reports and addresses from ministers.” There is no minute to prove that the proposal was formally adopted, but it took partial effect in 1852 at Wilmslow

<sup>1</sup> He declined the offer to pay his expenses. A year later a resolution of sympathy with him under his affliction—utter breakdown of health—was passed.

when Mr. Knill preached on the eve of the business meeting, and full effect with the Jubilee meetings at Tintwistle in 1856.

These meetings, though quiet and apparently unenthusiastic, must have been impressive. After Mr. Christopherson's sermon on Wednesday, April 23, the business meeting on Thursday was preceded by a prayer meeting and followed by a public meeting at which Rev. James Turner read a paper sketching the history of the Union and urging upon its members the inspiring example of its founders. Then, says the minute-book, "The services of this day were closed by the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, at which the Rev. James Turner presided."

1856.  
Jubilee  
meetings.

The society had done good work. It had provided faithful men for many rural districts, and reared several flourishing churches. But it was in danger of settling on its lees; its operations were languishing; and, in particular, it had practically lost sight of its main purpose. Hence "the principal" resolution of the meetings had reference to the immediate appointment of an itinerant agent "whose mission it shall be to go through the county for the purpose of examining and reporting upon the existing stations of the Union; but especially to carry on the work of an evangelist by cottage services and open-air meetings; and also to ascertain the districts not yet noticed by our exertions, where spheres of regular labour might beneficially be established." This resolution, moved by Mr. Christopherson, was passed, and a committee appointed<sup>1</sup> to select the agent. But after "many inquiries" it had to report failure (1857), and the matter dropped.

In 1857 the Union met at Sale. The aided churches were those we have grown to expect: Hazel Grove, Parkgate, Mottram and Hollingworth, Crewe and Haslington, Malpas, and Bucklow Hill. For effort outside these, however, £30 is placed in the hands of the Executive. Among other resolutions was one agreeing that the general secretary should, in future, have his travelling expenses paid by the executive; and an important one, moved by Rev. E. Morris (of Sale), calling attention to the fact that "recent efforts have been made to divert certain chapels

1857,  
April 22.  
42 present,  
including  
Mr. Rob-  
johns, of  
"Western  
Academy,"  
just candi-  
dating at  
Bowdon.

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Christopherson, Milne, Watt, James Rhodes.

from the use of Congregationalists, by the appointment of new trustees belonging to another denomination," and, therefore, begging pastors and deacons "to examine into the present state of the Trust Deeds of the various chapels, &c., and to cause them to be deposited for safety in some public institution belonging to the Denomination."

1858,  
July 21.  
58 present.

In 1858 the place of meeting was Townley Street, Macclesfield. It is announced that Parkgate Chapel has been sold to the Presbyterians, and it is resolved that the purchase money shall be secured, if possible, toward "a new chapel at Cheadle." Otherwise the beneficiaries are the same—except that a first grant (of £30) is made for the new cause at Lymm. Three resolutions concerning the new-born executive are noteworthy (1) that the expenses of its members in attending its meetings shall be defrayed by the Treasurer of the Union; (2) that every application for a grant, in order to be entertained by the Union, shall have previously come under the consideration of the Committee; and (3) that the Executive shall "prepare schedules" for use by the aided churches that so the Union may have "a complete statement of their condition." Another resolution heartily congratulates Mr. Turner, of Knutsford, "on the completion of the 50th year of his ministry in that place."

1859,  
April 27.  
36 present.

In 1859 the Union met at Chester, and one of its first acts was to admit the Rev. F. B. Brown and Rev. G. Short, of *Wrexham* (Salop) to membership, on the understanding that their respective churches, or themselves, contributed to its funds. Perhaps this condition was not palatable. At any rate nothing appears to have been contributed and nothing further is heard of *Wrexham*.<sup>1</sup> Then, after making the usual grants to the usual places, a resolution which the Union had great pleasure in passing, congratulated Bucklow Hill on becoming for the first time independent, and commended "the speedy adoption of that example" by the other "assisted" congregations. The Parkgate trustees, it seems, were not willing to devote the money in their hands to Cheadle, and would give it "only to some one destitute locality." Accordingly it was resolved to suggest Newton—a

<sup>1</sup> *Wrexham* (see p. 28) had been among the first adherents of the Union, but seems to have lapsed after the first year.

place which lay heavily on the mind of the Union at this time. Hollingworth having become estranged from Mottram, it is urged upon the latter to take up Newton instead.

Hanover Chapel, Stockport, was the place of meeting in 1860. On this occasion it became a rule for the future procedure of the Union that ministers from other counties, seeking admission as personal members, should be required to produce "a written recommendation" from the association with which they had been last connected, or from "two existing members" of this Union if they had not been connected with any other. As to the aided churches,<sup>1</sup> the only change of any importance is that Hazel Grove goes off the funds (for a brief period) and Cheadle comes on (also for a brief period).

1860,  
April 18.  
45 present,  
including  
Mr. McAll,  
of Hackney  
College.  
candidate  
for Town-  
ley Street.

In 1861 Bowdon entertained the Union. Here the "personal note" prevailed. Mr. Watt had removed to Farnworth, and the Union having tendered "its heartfelt thanks" to him "for his efficient services in the secretaryship," elected Rev. W. B. Macwilliam, of Middlewich, to the vacant office. Mr. Turner, of Knutsford, had resigned after fifty-three years of pastoral work there, and due expression was given to "the Christian regards of all the members and churches of the Union." Beyond this and a resolution authorising "the Secretary to co-operate with the Congregational Union in obtaining congregational statistics for the county of Chester," nothing occurred to vary the usual routine.<sup>2</sup>

1861,  
April 17.  
48 present,  
including  
Rev.  
Samuel  
Martin,  
of West-  
minster  
Chapel.  
London.

In 1862 the Union met at Zion Chapel, Hyde. As to the stations there was no change, except that Cheadle had already outgrown the need of help. As to other matters an item of interest is the resolution that the annual printed report shall contain "a List of the Churches, Preaching Stations, Pastors and Ministers in the Union: as well as an epitome of the minutes of the annual meeting. . . ." This has since been done—with clear advantage to one person at least.

1862,  
Thursday,  
April 24.  
55 present.

1862 was the bicentenary year of the Uniformity Act, and a reference to it is made in the Report, but of a rather ambiguous character. Why did the committee seem to protest that not to make a reference to it would be "in their opinion an unpardon-

<sup>1</sup> "Returns from Stations" are printed this year for the first time.

<sup>2</sup> One new item was that 2000 copies of the Report should be distributed among the churches.

able omission," or why did they "concede that any action on the subject on the part of the Union, as a Union, may neither be desirable nor practicable," or why did not the Union take the subject up at its meeting and pass a resolution emphatically declaring its purpose to celebrate the event? We cannot say. But it looks as if our predecessors of that day were hardly such good Nonconformists as we have pictured them. However, there is no uncertain sound in the secretary's voice: he commends "the great deed of 24th August 1662" to the Churches as an undying and splendid example of moral heroism. "Let the motto," he adds, "of the 24th August 1862—the motto of all the year—the motto of all our lives—be, 'Buy the truth, and sell it not,' and whatever be the cost the payment of the price will in nowise impoverish. We shall still be rich."

There is a literary memorial of the bicentenary celebrations—that, namely, entitled "Historical Sketches of Nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester, by various ministers and laymen in the County." But the origin of this was not official nor is there any allusion to it in the minutes or the reports. It was, in fact, as the editor, Rev. W. Urwick, M.A., of Hatherlow, says in his preface, a private enterprise. "At a meeting of ministers and delegates from the Independent Churches of Cheshire held early in 1862, to celebrate the bicentenary of English Nonconformity, three short papers were read upon the rise of dissent at Knutsford, Tintwistle, and Hatherlow, and a suggestion was made that a series of similar papers should be prepared by ministers in the County upon Nonconformist history in their respective localities. The suggestion was adopted, a publication committee chosen, and a list of contributions prepared . . . and the work has grown to a much larger size than was at first anticipated." It appeared in 1864, and the value of it, based as it was on much painstaking research and labour by the editor and his band of coadjutors, is very great—how great only those can say who have had occasion to traverse the same ground.

From this date (1862) onward the reports are regularly annual, and so detailed that the briefest summary would make the narrative drag interminably. It must suffice, therefore, to group under a few heads what seems of chief importance.



And first, as framework for the rest, let us note the steps by which the Union completed its organisation. In 1863 the rules were referred to the executive for revision, and the suggested alterations were adopted at the annual meeting in 1865. Compared with those of 1848 we see that the society becomes the "Cheshire Congregational Union"; that the constitution is widened so as to include resident ministers who are without pastoral charge, and annual subscribers of 10s. 6d. and upwards—no guarantee being required that they are members of a Congregational church; that the objects of the Union comprehend "the promotion of Unity, Peace, and Order among the associated ministers and churches"—a task expressly declined by the founders—and "co-operation with other county Unions, and with the Congregational Union of England and Wales"; that the Government, still of course vested in the General Assembly, can be shared by each church to the extent of two delegates and of "an additional delegate for every fifty members above the first hundred"; that there shall be an executive consisting "of the Treasurer and Secretary and twelve members;" that instead of two district committees there shall be five—Chester, Nantwich, Macclesfield, Stockport, Bowdon; that all applications for aid must come to the Assembly through the District Committee, and also with the endorsement of the Executive; that only motions can be discussed of which notice has "been given at last meeting or through the Executive Committee in the convening circular;" and that several Miscellaneous Rules are omitted—that, for instance, referring to the arrangement of public services at the place of annual meeting, and that which forbids the bringing forward of any matter of "national or religious interest"—even though duly notified—"unless thirty members of the General Committee be present." Another revisal took place in 1872; and, meanwhile, one or two of the rules came up in a way hardly foreseen. Thus on the application of Holywell for a grant in 1869 and its rejection on the ground that "Holywell lay beyond the boundaries of the county," Mr. Joseph Thompson gave notice of his intention to move at the 1870 meeting "That Rule 3 as far as it relates to the sphere of this Society's operations be interpreted so as to include districts adjacent to the County of

i. Completing organisation.

1865.  
Third  
Revision  
of Rules.

Chester though they be not actually within its boundaries." This motion in due time found a seconder in Rev. E. Morris, of Sale and was "unanimously adopted"—a change which at once admitted Mold to the Union as well as Holywell. Arising out of some vagueness in the same Rule came a motion which fared less prosperously. This was a motion by Rev. W. Urwick in 1870 "That in furtherance of the object of this Union as stated in Rule 3, it be allowable to make grants in the usual way to our Churches requiring pecuniary help for the support of Bible women and day-school teachers in connection with them." Mr. Urwick read a paper in support of his proposal, and at an adjourned meeting at Crewe in September (the first autumnal session) carried it by a majority of one.<sup>1</sup> At the next annual meeting, however (Chester, 1871), Rev. Watson Smith, of Wilmslow, gave notice of a motion to rescind the resolution—a motion which was carried in 1872. There can be little doubt Mr. Urwick's construction of the Rule was both mistaken and unadvisable. But he was an enthusiast in the cause of education and of education managed by the churches. Hence his next motion—notified as soon as Mr. Smith's had passed—"That it is desirable to set on foot an education fund to help our weak Churches to do in education what the stronger churches in the county already are doing." Alas! when it came before the Assembly in 1873<sup>2</sup> (at Cheadle) a proposal of "the previous question" shelved it by a large majority. Evidently it was the prevailing mind of the Union that this was a question rather for the State than the churches! Rule 13, also, providing that "In future settlements no grants shall be made to any Church which will not, with the aid of the Union, give a salary of at least £100 per annum to its pastor," found an objector in Mr. B. Bostock, who notified in 1871 that he should move to put £80 instead of £100; at the same time Mr. Urwick notified that he should move the formal restriction of the Rules "relating to membership" of the Union to "males only"; and Rev. J. D. Riley (of Holywell) notified that he should move, with reference to Rule 12, the necessity of all "proposals for the admission or

<sup>1</sup> 17 to 16. Seconded by Rev. G. J. Allen, Macclesfield.

<sup>2</sup> Seconded by Rev. G. K. Walker of Middlewich.

dismissal" of members being considered by the Executive before coming up at the annual meeting. Incited perhaps by these sporadic attacks the Assembly (in 1872) took in hand the Rules as a whole: altering Rule 2 to the effect that donors of £10 as well as subscribers of 10s. 6d. might be admitted (subject strictly to Rule 12) "so long as they continue in full fellowship with Congregational churches"; Rule 7 to the effect that one of the duties of the secretary shall be "to keep a revised roll to be printed each year along with the Report"; Rule 8 to the effect that *ex-officio* members shall be the Chairman, Chairman-elect, and the District Secretaries, besides the General Secretary and Treasurer—and that, in addition, the elected members shall be 10 instead of 12; Rule 11, to the effect that every application for a grant must first have been considered by the *District* committee as well as by the Executive; Rule 12, to the effect that "admissions, transfers, and exclusions of members of churches" must be decided by the Assembly only after consideration by both "the District and Executive Committees."

1872.  
Fourth  
Revision  
of Rules.

In this form the Rules rested till 1880—with a single important exception. In 1875 Rev. A. Wilson (of Hanover Chapel) gave notice of the following, that to Rule 11 be added the words "nor shall grants continue to be paid to aided churches inviting new pastors unless such invitations meet with the approval of the Executive Committee." At the meeting of 1876 (March) Rev. F. Barnes moved this for Mr. Wilson, but it was "dropped" through want of time. In 1877 Mr. Barnes brought it up again—somewhat strengthened—and the discussion upon it became so eager that again it had to be deferred. Then in 1878 (for some reason) Rev. D. B. Hooke, of Mold, submitted a softened version<sup>1</sup> of it which was carried.

In 1879, on the motion of the secretary, Rule 14 (relating to order of business) was expunged; and a standing order to the same effect adopted in its stead. A few verbal alterations were introduced into other Rules, in order to adapt them to the new state of things produced by joining the Church Aid Society. It was further resolved that the Executive should appoint a sub-

<sup>1</sup> The Committee shall be consulted by an aided Church before inviting a minister.

1880.  
Fifth  
Revision  
of Rules.

committee for revising both the Rules and the standing orders before next annual meeting. The revision, which took place accordingly (Rock Ferry, 1880), left things much as they were; but in Rule 2 membership was opened to "Evangelists having charge of mission stations or churches"; in Rule 3 the 1865 clause, which made it an object of the Union to promote "unity, peace, and order among the associated ministers and churches" was omitted; in Rule 8 drawing up "Annual Budgets for the Church Aid Society" was added to the duties of the Executive Committee; and in place of Rule 13, which refused a grant to any church not giving its minister at least a salary of £100, it was decreed "that before a church receiving assistance from the Union invites a minister to become its pastor, an opportunity shall be afforded to the Executive of expressing its approval or disapproval."

1906.  
Sixth  
Revision  
of Rules.

The latest revision, accepted at Stockport in the present year, alters this so as to make it read "*must* have received the sanction of the Executive Committee." Further, it revives, under Rule 11, (perhaps unwittingly), a counsel of prudence practised by the "fathers" with respect to their Itinerants (see Rule 1825), viz. that "in order to secure full and free consideration, the committees are recommended to request the representatives of each church applying to withdraw while the discussion in that particular case is taken." Prudence shows itself also in a clause added to Rule 2, with the intent of limiting the membership to those persons only who belong to a church "*which is itself within the Union.*"

Chairman.

Other slight changes presuppose events which may here be mentioned. One of these is the heightened status of the chairman. Up to 1865 some one (generally a layman) present at the annual meeting was "called to the chair." In that year, for the first time, a chairman was appointed for the ensuing year, viz. Rev. John Marshall of Over (archbishop of the county). The meeting in 1866 was not at Over, but at Chester, and Mr. Marshall could not attend. Rev. P. C. Barker, minister of Queen Street, was therefore asked to preside; and at the close of the meeting Knutsford was selected for the session of 1867, with its minister, Rev. R. Alliott, for chairman. This set up a new

custom which continued till 1877, when the secretary (Rev. T. Robinson) "proposed the following resolution, which was adopted unanimously—'That after this year the custom of selecting the chairman of the Union from the church where the annual meeting is held be discontinued, and the office be considered open to all members of the Union, whether ministers or laymen.'" Mr. Alliott seems to have begun another custom, that of delivering a formally prepared address, which has continued unto this day. A third custom, of printing the chairman's address with the Annual Report, which likewise started from him, was broken through in 1879 by Mr. G. Stanley Wood, who "did not consent to the publication of his address"—thoughtful, no doubt, of the finances (for he was treasurer, too), but unmindful of the refreshment he was withdrawing from such as might be compelled hereafter (like the present writer) to sojourn in the desert. For, of a truth, this long series of addresses forms, on the whole, a rich feast for mind and heart—quite apart from its historical value.

During the next seven years the mode of election was by nomination and open vote; then, in 1884, Rev. T. W. Pinn carried a motion "that the election of chairman be by ballot without nomination; but that no chairman be considered elected unless he have obtained the vote of a majority of those present and voting." This change came into operation the same year—with the result that the secretary, Mr. Robinson, was elected by an almost unanimous vote.<sup>1</sup> By another change, made in 1903, nomination of candidates was introduced—each nomination to be sent to the General Secretary not later than the 1st of March, and signed by at least five members of the Union. Should there be no such nomination, it was provided that the Executive nominate not less than three candidates for the Assembly to vote upon, and (by a later resolution of 1905) in case of the secretary receiving "fewer than three nominations" beforehand, the Executive were empowered to "fill them up to that number."

With regard to the Executive, we find that after its formation in 1856 the custom for some years was to leave its selection

Executive  
Committee.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robinson's address (in 1885) was printed with the Report—an exception to the rule!



entirely to the annual meeting. But in 1866 Mr. Urwick gave notice of the following motion: "that each District Committee shall nominate two of its members to be proposed as members of the Executive Committee at the annual meeting." This was carried next year with the addition "that the chairman and chairman-elect shall be *ex-officio* members of the Executive Committee." In 1871 it was resolved to enlarge the number of *ex-officio* members by the addition of the "district secretaries." In 1888 it was agreed to amalgamate the Stockport and Macclesfield districts under one secretary; and, at the same time, to form the churches of the Wirral Peninsula (hitherto part of the Chester district) into a separate district with its own secretary. This left the *ex-officio* element on the Committee what it was. Then in 1891 a resolution was carried unanimously "that the annual meeting shall elect four members of the Union to act on the Executive in addition to those nominated by the district meetings, and that Rule 8 be altered accordingly." For the first two or three years these four were "added by co-optation on the part of the Executive"—the Assembly approving by show of hands. On the motion of Rev. F. Barnes this method was changed, after 1893, for that of election by "nomination and ballot." But in 1898 the original custom was restored, and for good reasons. Add another *ex-officio* member in the ex-chairman (according to the latest revision of Rules); and the Committee now consists of twenty-four members, as against ten when first established and an average of twelve for some years after.

This growth of the Executive does not (or at least need not) mean that the Assembly, as the ultimate authority, has lost any of its control. But it certainly implied the more efficient discharge of an increasing amount and variety of business. In 1856, for instance, it seems to have been quite easy to get through the business at a sauntering pace before an early dinner. In 1904, however, it is felt to be nothing but reasonable that "In view of the increasing pressure of business (and questions of public importance) upon the time of the Assembly . . . the Executive be instructed to make arrangements whereby an additional half-day shall be included within the session of this Union."

Notable especially has been the gradual prominence taken by public questions. There were public questions before 1868, but not a trace of them can be gathered from the Reports. The Union still continued under the spell of that timorous and selfish spirit which in the Rules of 1848 dictated the exclusion of public questions from its programme. Then in 1868 three resolutions evinced the presence of a different temper. One (moved by Mr. Joseph Thompson) expressed the cordial thanks of the Union to Mr. Gladstone for his Irish Church proposals, and asked the members of the Union to sign a petition in their favour; another (moved by Rev. R. Alliot) thanked Mr. J. D. Coleridge for his Bill in the House of Commons designed to open the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and also asked the members to sign a petition; the third (moved by Mr. Joseph Wright) proposed that a Memorial of Congratulation to the Queen on the recent happy deliverance of her son the Duke of Edinburgh be engrossed, signed by the chairman and secretary, and forwarded through the proper channel. Perhaps even yet the Assembly could not quite rid itself of the old leaven; for between 1868 and 1873 only one Resolution of a like sort is recorded. But from that date onwards all hesitation may be said to have vanished and a "wider outlook" becomes habitual. A mere statement of the fact that during the next thirty-two years as many as fifty-five Resolutions, bearing on social or political topics, were brought forward, discussed and adopted, is enough to prove this. Indeed, the Resolutions might furnish a very fair index to the current burning interests of public life during all these years. Thus they mark nearly every phase of the education controversy—particularly the latest—and every turn in the movement for disestablishment, and such matters as the Contagious Diseases Act (1876-77), the Russo-Turkish War (1877), the threatened war with Russia (1878), the Transvaal Peace (1881), the attempt to assassinate the Queen (1882), the Queen's Jubilee (1887), the death of John Bright (1889), proposals for arbitration (1893), Mr. Gladstone's retirement (1897), Turkish Atrocities (1895, 96, 97), the Boer War (1901), Chinese Labour (1903), &c. Remarkable, in particular,

is the prominence given to the temperance question, coming up as it does year after year latterly, and evidently corresponding to a deepened sense of its extreme urgency. Moreover, it can be said with truth that the attitude of the Union throughout has been worthy of itself as an inheritor of traditions which render the reviled "Nonconformist conscience" instinctively loyal to the cause of justice, humanity, and general progress.

ii. The  
Aided  
Churches.

We will now revert to the Union's chief business, viz. its relation to the aided churches. In 1859 we meet with the first statistical<sup>1</sup> return of these, viz. Crewe and Haslington, Hazel Grove, Lymm, Malpas, Mottram and Newton Cheadle. In 1860 Hazel Grove goes off the fund. In 1861 Partington comes on, and Gatley is coupled with Cheadle for a joint-grant of £40. In 1862 Cheadle drops out. In 1864 the secretary<sup>2</sup> (to use his own words) has still "to ring the changes on the seven bells of former years"—Crewe and Haslington, Gatley, Lymm, Malpas, Mottram, Partington. In 1866 the Union, being now divided into five districts, takes up Bollington in the Macclesfield district, and in Bowdon district—Witton and Marston, Knolls Green.

In 1867 the list is lengthened by grants to Barton as well as Malpas (Chester district); Furness Vale, and Wood End (Stockport district); Ashton, Hart Lane, and Northenden (Bowdon district). In 1868 the list is the same, except that Lymm has become self-sustaining. 1869 exhibits considerable changes and a rare prosperity. Thus, in the Chester district, Malpas is not mentioned, but Boughton and Chriselton are additional to Barton. In the Nantwich district Haslington and Wheelock (re-united the previous year) stand separate from Crewe, which is making rapid headway. In the Stockport district Wood End disappears. In the Bowdon district Knolls Green goes unaided, Partington does not ask for a grant, and Knutsford, once so flourishing, asks one for the first time. Moreover, £60 is allocated to

<sup>1</sup> We omit the statistics.

<sup>2</sup> He says in his introductory remarks that there are thirty-three churches in connection with the Union, of which ten are vacant, representing six-sixteenths of the congregations and seven-sixteenths of the Church membership. Of these are Bowdon, Queen Street (Chester), Union Street (Hyde), Townley Street (Macclesfield), Middlewich.

Witton, Moulton, and Davenham under the superintendence of the church at Northwich; £10 to Norbury; £50 to Holywell; while Hazel Grove, which is again impecunious, is to have £30 if the "committee of inquiry" think it deserved. Nor is this all: for "the balance of funds" (some £300), "remaining in the treasurer's hands after the foregoing grants are<sup>1</sup> provided for," is to be "at the disposal of the Executive Committee for evangelistic operations in the county." In 1870 the notable changes are, that in the Chester district Mold is made a beneficiary in addition to Holywell, and Malpas comes back in company with Threapwood; that in the Nantwich district Crewe has reached independence; that in the Stockport district Cheadle Hulme comes on; and that in the Bowdon district Knolls Green and Mobberley Mills are conjoined for a grant. Further, the Crewe District Committee is authorised to expend £20 toward "an effort to introduce the preaching of the Gospel at Alsager."

In 1871 Rock Ferry appears (for the first and last time) as having received £25 and to receive at the rate of £40 from settlement of minister; Whaley Bridge is added to Furness Vale; and £10 is voted for Apethorn, a station just begun by Zion Chapel, Hyde. In 1872, while Furness Vale is dropped, the newcomers are Brereton (reorganised by the Sandbach Church) and Ashton-on-Mersey, now divorced from Hart Lane and under Mr. Morris, of Sale. In 1873 Brereton "has sent in no returns," and so gets no grant; and the only other change is the temporary withdrawal of Gatley. In 1874 Cheadle Hulme declares off; in 1875 Buckley (Flintshire) is mentioned as in receipt of a grant for the second time; in 1876 ready help is accorded to Union Chapel, Stockport; in 1877 a "new mission" at Crewe and Woodley (Stockport district) are admitted to benefit; in 1878 Gatley and Hazel Grove find their way back, while Alsager, nothing having been granted<sup>2</sup> since 1870, obtains its first aid as a new Congregational Church; and in 1879 Buckley, at the request of the Executive, is taken over by the North Wales English Association. During the following ten years the record is somewhat more varied. Tattenhall, Handbridge, Sandbach, and the Tabernacle (Stock-

port) come on the Fund in 1880. In 1881 Mold goes off. In 1883 Sandbach unites with Wheelock; the Tabernacle has grown strong enough to walk alone; Witton is detached from Moulton and drops out; Bucklow Hill reappears. In 1884 Witton is linked again to Moulton, and (it may be well to state) the number of stations is then fourteen—Handbridge, Malpas and Threapwood, Alsager, Sandbach and Wheelock, Bollington, Gatley, Hazel Grove, Hollingworth, Whaley Bridge, Woodley, Ashton-on-Mersey, Bucklow Hill, Knutsford and Mobberley, Moulton and Witton. Thus the number has increased from eight to fourteen since 1859—of which all but two are new cases, while the total grant has advanced from £200 (or £260) to £555. Except that Hoylake is added in 1885, Nantwich in 1888, Prenton in 1889, Farndon in 1890, Bradeley (another of Mr. Huxley's stations) in 1891, Seacombe and Brinksway in 1892; and that, on the other hand, Whaley Bridge goes off in 1888, Hoylake the same in 1890 (to come back for a year or two in 1895), Prenton the same in 1892 (to come back likewise in 1896), and Bollington the same, for just a year, in 1894—with these exceptions there is no change in the list till 1897. Then Hamilton Square (Birkenhead) joins Seacombe and Prenton in the Wirral district; and Buxton Road, in the Stockport district, comes up for the first time. In 1898 the Crewe district presents a new case in Frodsham<sup>1</sup>; an "urgent application" is received from an old case, Lymm; and Bollington falls back on its own resources—for a while. No change occurs in 1899 and 1900. In 1901, however, Seacombe is able to go alone; and, while Gatley again drops out of the Stockport group, Bollington, Whaley Bridge and Bramhall are added. In 1902 Handbridge ceases to be dependent; in 1903 the same can be said of Hamilton Square, and, in 1904, of Prenton. For this year the list is as follows: Farndon and Barton, Malpas and Threapwood, Tattenhall, Frodsham, Sandbach and Wheelock, Brinksway, Buxton Road, Bramhall, Bollington, Whaley Bridge, Gatley, Ashton-on-Mersey, Bucklow Hill, Knutsford, Lymm, Knolls Green (Mobberley) and Moulton—seventeen in all, with grants amounting to £620. For 1905

<sup>1</sup> Transferred to the Chester district in 1901.



and 1906 the number is the same, with a total grant respectively of £645 and £640, 10s. It may be added that these places are reported to have 5549 sittings, 885 church members, 1910 Sunday school scholars and 202 teachers. Apart from these (but including what are set down as missions) there are sixty-nine churches in the Union,<sup>1</sup> having accommodation for 28,374 persons—with 7036 members, 14,163 scholars, and 1230 teachers. The population of Cheshire in 1901 was 814,555. In 1866 it was 505,428; and, at that time (according to Mr. Urwick),<sup>2</sup> the number of Independent chapels in the county was sixty-nine all told.<sup>3</sup> It may seem, therefore, as if relatively Congregationalists have done less than hold their own. But, considering that many of the chapels and stations in 1866 were small compared with those which now exist, this would be a doubtful inference. Perhaps it is nearer the truth to say that they have kept pace with the population, but have not progressed to the full extent of their opportunity.

The chief object of the Union at its inception was iii. Evan-  
gelisation. evangelisation; and, of course, many of the aided churches embody the results of evangelistic work. But how far (in addition) has it kept this object in the front? It will be remembered that the proposal of the Jubilee meeting (1856) to obtain the services of an "Itinerant agent" dwindled down into a vote of £30 towards "efforts in new fields"; and here, so far as one can see, the matter ended. The Report for 1861 closes with a pious wish that the deliberations of this fifth meeting may "issue in more vigorous and extended effort to make Cheshire more and more a garden of the Lord." But beyond years of fruitless "pains" bestowed upon Newton, there is little<sup>4</sup> to show in the way of "extended effort" for some years. From 1866, however, the increase of effort becomes evident. It went hand in hand with a rapid increase of income, due partly to

<sup>1</sup> Three others, Neston, Port Sunlight and Thornton Hough, are not in the Union.

<sup>2</sup> Address "On Congregationalism in Cheshire" in 1867.

<sup>3</sup> The Report for 1866 gives sixty-six at the outside (including mission rooms).

<sup>4</sup> The "little" is a vote of £50 in 1865 to each of the district committees for the purpose of aiding fresh evangelistic efforts in the county, and in neglected districts on its borders.

stimulus from "that prince of givers," Mr. Samuel Morley. Thus in 1868-69 the income rose from £517 to £710, and the Executive found itself with a balance to the good of £310. How to use it presented no difficulty. Grants were "made specifically to (aided) churches at the heart" of large populations for labour in connection with the masses immediately around them"; "in the case of small populations" grants were "made conditional upon evangelistic labours in villages and hamlets within a circuit of a few miles of the central station"; and "in reference to places where probable openings for new stations present themselves," grants were "placed at the disposal of district committees, so that they might be in a position to commence operations without delay should opportunities of doing so definitely" occur. In 1869 the income reached £821, and, after meeting all the usual claims, it was resolved that the balance should be available by "the Executive for evangelistic operations in the county." A similar resolution meets us in 1871; and that the subject of "county evangelistic work" was exciting attention appears from a paper, under that title, read by Rev. T. Peters (Common Hall Street, Chester) at the "adjourned autumnal session" in September.

It was a bad sign, however, that this same year several urgent appeals for help had to be refused for want of funds. The balance in hand has, in fact, reached vanishing point, and next year turns to a deficit of £30. Under such circumstances dreams of aggressive work began to melt away. Yet the address of the chairman for this year (Rev. P. W. Darnton of Queen Street, Chester) was intensely missionary. "I confess sometimes," he says in one place, "to a feeling of deep sadness, deep almost as despair, when I consider the vastness of the world's desolation and the cool, comfortable sort of Christianity cherished in our churches. While thousands of poor souls are tossing on the angry ocean, and hundreds going down, hour by hour, into the dark depths of the grave—desolate, hopeless—we are like men sitting under a comfortable shelter upon the shore, and singing our quiet psalms. We ought to be on the echoing beach launching the lifeboat, or pushing through the angry surge in search of those that are drowning. When, oh when, shall we

be aroused to earnestness? When shall we hear in every bursting wave the trumpet-call of God, and in every cry of suffering and woe the voice of our divine Saviour? When shall we hear and respond and go forth with Christ 'to seek and to save those that are lost'?" His earnest prayer, in which he urges all to join, is, that "the mighty tides of divine grace" may rise. Nay, he concludes, "the tide must rise. It is rising. Even now in many hearts the barriers are falling, and though the bright and blessed waters seem to come slowly, yet they flow surely, and 'the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters, cover the sea.'" The words were prophetic.

In the Report of 1874 it could be said, "At no time has this Union had more signal manifestations of 'Divine favour.' It is the expectation of not a few that we shall see greater things than these. There have been the droppings of the early and the latter rain in many places, and we may reasonably hope that the churches of Cheshire will soon enjoy their times of refreshing." Expectation and preparedness were quickened by another address from Mr. Darnton on "The Promotion of Spiritual Life in our Churches." Then the revival came.

"At our annual meetings last year and the year before" (says the Report of 1875), "the spiritual condition of our churches formed the subject of earnest and anxious deliberation. This year we have cause to praise God for gracious answers which He has vouchsafed to our prayers. At Chester, Stockport, Marple, and other places, the churches have been visited in some cases with astonishing signs of the Divine power. The church at Marple has had between sixty and seventy applicants for church fellowship during the last two months. One of the churches at Stockport admitted over sixty members in one month. These are instances of a work which has been going on with greater or less energy over a considerable part of the county." It was the time of Messrs. Moody and Sankey's campaign, and they had recently been in Manchester and Liverpool. But, though due credit was given to their influence, the Report insists that "the chief cause" of the awakening "seems to have been the hard, honest toil of past years which has led up to and prepared the way for the results we now behold. This is evident from the

fact that these large accessions of converts are drawn chiefly from the Sunday schools, and those who have been regularly receiving religious instruction. This being the case, we have no need either to suspect the genuineness of the work, or to feel that the methods employed disparage the ordinary methods of church work. We do not think it an incredible thing that the farmer is able to reap in two or three weeks the corn which has taken a whole season to bring to maturity; neither does the reaper with his swift operations throw discredit on the slower processes of the ploughman. We have prayed long for the harvest, and it has come. Let us, therefore, thrust in the sickle and reap; and even while we reap, let us plough and sow for future harvest."

These seem to us wise words and well worthy of remembrance. Anyhow, the revival was real; its fruits were rich, permanent, and varied; and not the least remarkable of them was the fact that the years which immediately followed were the most prosperous financially in the history of the Union. Think of being able to expend £769 in 1876-77, and still having nearly £270 in hand! No wonder the Union thought the time had come to give free play to generous impulses. A scheme was set on foot by which to make £150 the minimum stipend of every minister in the county; £60 was devoted, in addition to increased grants, for division among poor churches *not* receiving aid; £100 was left with the committee to meet unforeseen cases of emergency; donations to the extent of £50 a year for three years were given to the Salop Association; another of £50 was given to the North Wales Association; nor was the work of evangelisation overlooked. "As presenting beyond all competition the most promising field," £100 was voted for the planting of a mission in Crewe, and £10 towards what was taken to be another "promising field" at Woodley.

Further, in 1878, itinerant services, or "preaching tours similar to those promoted in Lancashire and Yorkshire with such good results," were organised at the suggestion of the Executive by at least two of the district committees. In connection with Chester, "the Revs. J. D. Riley (Holywell) and R. W. Lloyd (Great Boughton) went through several villages in the district

lying between Malpas and Wrexham, in which they held interesting and well-attended services"; and in connection with Bowdon the "District Committee" Minute-Book has a very interesting entry: "*June 17, 1878.*—The Rev. T. W. Pinn read the report of the Committee appointed to arrange for special evangelistic services." It appeared from this report that twenty-eight services were held at various places in the district, viz.: Lymm, Warburton, Thelwall, Partington, Cadishead, Baguley, Broadheath, Dunham Wood Houses, Bucklow Hill, Tabley, Knutsford, High Leigh, Asley, Witton, Moulton, Little Leigh. The following members took part in the services: Messrs. E. Morris, J. Johns, A. Mackennal, T. W. Pinn, W. Pinn, H. Cope, J. Johnson, W. Fielden, W. Adamson, R. Dutton, J. Dean, W. Milne, G. Arrowsmith. The report stated that only at one place had there been any opposition manifested, this exception being Tabley, where the clergyman came to each of the meetings and asserted his right, as vicar, to preside. At the second meeting, however, this right was refused; and, being unable to have his own way, he left. Some who sympathised with him had also brought to a field near the place of meeting a large quantity of beer, and called away some of the audience to regale themselves with the beer. This attempt to disturb the meeting, however, failed. After the reading of the report further information respecting the meetings was given by the different members of the committee; and special interest was taken in the statement made by Mr. Dean of the warm welcome given to himself and Mr. Fielden by the people in Astley and Aston. It was felt that some means should be adopted to work this isolated district, many members thinking that the services of a colporteur would be very efficient."<sup>1</sup>

Revivals, though they may raise the general level of spiritual life, are always succeeded by some degree of spiritual depression. So it was in the present instance—as may be inferred from the reduced income of the Union, and also from such a circumstance

<sup>1</sup> In the Stockport district the "effort" confined itself to the holding of "a Public Evangelistic Service" at Hollingworth after the usual meeting in September (1878). The comparative forwardness of the Bowdon district in this matter is attested by its renewed appointment of a committee (March 1879) to arrange for evangelistic services and the devotion of a week to these in the September following.



as the lively and lengthened discussion which took place after two short papers (read at the annual meeting of 1881) by Messrs. T. Rigby and B. S. Bostock on "Special Services as a means of promoting the Revival of our Churches." The latter gentleman has always been an eager advocate of aggressive work, and it was he who gave notice of a motion in 1883, "that the Executive Committee be requested to nominate a sub-committee to consider the desirableness of appointing a travelling evangelist for the county of Chester." When the motion came on (in 1884) it evoked "several interesting addresses and much earnest discussion;" but finally Mr. Bostock accepted the following amendment: "that without appointing a permanent evangelist, steps shall be taken by the Executive Committee for the promotion of direct evangelistic work throughout the county of Chester." A natural sequel to this was the appointment (by the Executive on May 5th) of a sub-committee to give it effect. The committee consisted of Messrs. A. Clark, G. Stanley Wood, and J. W. Paull, who was to act as convener. Its first step (after making certain necessary inquiries) was to issue circulars to the pastors of the associated churches, asking if they desired to utilise the services of the Association, through the sub-committee, in arranging for an evangelistic mission during the approaching winter. In the end missions were thus arranged for and held at Over, Handbridge, Wheelock, Gatley, Northwich, Macclesfield (Park Green), and Knutsford. The missionaries were respectively Revs. W. A. Blake, J. W. Paull, H. Harries, T. W. Pinn, Wm. Reid, H. Ward Price, A. Mackennal, F. Moon. Three other churches held similar services arranged for directly by themselves, viz. Bowdon, mission preacher, Rev. Dr. Macfadyen; Hazel Grove, various preachers; Stockport (Wellington Road), various preachers. The services in each of these ten churches lasted from five to eight days; and Mr. Paull (in his valuable report to the next annual meeting) finds the results encouraging.

He names these in particular—a consciousness on the part of almost every pastor who has reported on the mission held at his church, that it was to himself and his people a season of real spiritual blessing; true conversions, of which there can be no doubt, in some places; increased warmth and harmony of feeling

among the members of the churches concerned ; blessings experienced by others beyond the limits of the church and congregation where the mission was held ; a realisation of joy and blessing by the mission preachers themselves. Considering such results, "Is it possible," asks Mr. Paull, "to do other than rejoice and thank God that He moved the heart of our brother to give the notice of motion two years ago, of which these services and the blessing they have wrought throughout the county are, humanly speaking, the result ?" In conclusion some lessons are pointed out :—(1) While not essential to the true success of a mission, it would appear to be decidedly advantageous that it should be conducted by one man throughout ; (2) the duration of a mission ought not to be less than a week, should certainly include one Sunday, and it is better if it can be made longer and include two Sundays ; (3) the previous preparation of the church and neighbourhood is found to be of the utmost importance ; (4) "when practicable a Bible reading, or meeting for the instruction of Christians in the spiritual life" should be held "in the morning or afternoon of each day, as well as the Gospel service at night ;" (5) it is important to embody the warmth of feeling and willingness to work naturally aroused by a special mission in some form of spiritual activity, *e.g.* a Bible Class or Prayer Union.

The impulse thus started did not soon spend itself. The sub-committee still continued its directive function, and had applications which led to missions being held in the early part of 1886 at twelve places :—Congleton, Birkenhead, Crewe, Northwich, Middlewich, Handbridge, Wheelock, Sandbach, Baguley, Macclesfield (Park Green), Runcorn, and Little Moor. So many claims made it necessary to look for outside help, and in Mr. George Green (for some years evangelist in the employ of the Congregational Unions of Gloucester and Warwickshire) a man was forthcoming whose ministry proved so effectual that "a very general desire" was expressed, by those churches which he visited, that his services should be retained "for the county for a twelvemonth"—a desire with which the Executive Committee heartily agreed, though the insufficient income of the Union prevented it from urging the step.

A lull followed. In 1887 we hear of no more special missions; and it is remarked that even those already held have not been quite of the sort most needed. What, that is to say, of *itinerant* work? Compared with other counties Cheshire is said to lag behind in this respect. And it is suggested that an agency for such work is at hand in the sixty or more lay preachers belonging to the churches. In the next Report (1888) it is further suggested that ministers and their helpers might make incursions during the summer months into the country, and something be done in the way of open-air preaching, or a tent be obtained and a country mission conducted by two or three brethren together. How far these suggestions may have borne fruit does not appear. But missions of the other—the domestic—kind were resumed again under a sub-committee. Seven such missions took place during the winter of 1887—each lasting from three to seven days, and all conducted by ministers of the county. And in 1888 Runcorn was the centre of a strictly evangelistic experiment. The minister of that church pointed out the scope for religious work among the navvies in his district (labouring on the Manchester ship canal); and offered the use of a mission-room near the Ship Canal works free of rent if the Union would find an evangelist. After inquiry and inspection the offer was accepted and an evangelist from Bolton, Mr. J. J. Smith, placed in charge. The experiment failed—and failed, alas! mainly through the fact that another “missionary, placed on the Runcorn branch of the works by the contractor, regarded our missionary as an interloper and put every obstacle in his way.” So at the end of four months the engagement with Mr. Smith was closed—20th December.

At the annual meeting in 1889 Rev. H. Ward Price (of Wycliff Chapel, Stockport) secured the passing of a resolution in favour of devoting a larger amount of the funds of the Union to the planting of new churches, and the promotion of mission effort throughout the county. Mr. Price was very much in earnest, and carried the Union with him. Hence we read in the Report of 1890 that “Open-air services were arranged for, and held in two or three country districts during the summer of last year, and arrangements are now in progress for prosecuting this form of

evangelistic work on a wider scale during coming months." Hence, too, we find that the sub-committee chosen to deal with the matter have been striving (in co-operation with the Liverpool Chapel Building Society) to open a door in Seacombe—where "the growth of population has been very rapid of late, and every available place of worship is crowded"—as well as turning its attention to Davenport (Bramhall), Brinksway, and West Kirby (Hoylake).

Mr. Price discovered that the terms of Rule 3 (defining the objects of the Union) stood in his way; and, therefore, he moved in 1891 that "Rule 3 be altered so as to enable the Union to expend money on sites and buildings needed in aggressive work." The question was remitted to the Executive; and, when Mr. Price brought it up again, in 1892, to the District Committee. In June he attended a meeting of the Bowdon district at Northwich by invitation, and won over the members present to his views, though, six months later, the same district drew back, considering that the Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel Building Society had lately been resuscitated. In 1893 he was induced to postpone the resolution for another year; and then—under the more specific form<sup>1</sup> which he gave it—it was finally rejected.

But his object, so far as regards the opening up of new fields, was not lost sight of. On the contrary, the General Committee claimed to have this much in mind—mentioning, by way of proof, the site for a new chapel acquired at Great Moor (Buxton Road), Stockport and our "denominational activity" in the Wirral Peninsula, at Prenton, Hoylake, Seacombe.' Nor were special missions neglected. During 1894, for example, at least eight churches of the county—aided or unaided—held them, in addition to a united mission at Stockport in which eleven churches took part. Probably no year has been quite without such missions here and there; and in 1901 joyful notice is taken of "the many United Free Church missions which have been held in this county as elsewhere." But for the most part they have not been initiated by the Union, though always sure of its sympathy. Not, in fact, since the effort of 1885-86 has there been any General Mission.

<sup>1</sup> 10 per cent. of income every year to be set aside for the purpose named.

movement emanating from the Union until the present year (1906), when a Missions Committee has again been appointed, with the object of arranging for special services throughout the county during the autumn and winter. It is felt that this may be one worthy way of consolidating and extending the work for which the Union came into existence a hundred years ago. What, however, of the Union's earliest concern, "the spread of the Gospel in the unevangelised parts of the county by means of itinerant preaching"? There are sporadic and sometimes wistful references to it in the later reports. But practically it has fallen more and more into the shade, and if we are inclined to bemoan this fact let us rather consider that the very success of the Union, together with the vast increase of other religious agencies, has so far lessened the darkness, or at least set up almost everywhere the means of spiritual enlightenment, that there is now far less need for what was once absolutely necessary. Perhaps from this point of view the cessation of "itinerant" work on the part of the Union may become a reason for thankfulness. The great matter is for each church in the county to be itinerant as respects its own immediate neighbourhood.

iv.  
Finance.

Want of funds has been the Union's chief hindrance, says the Report of 1905. "Your committee earnestly appeals to the churches to supply them with funds wherewith to meet the growing demands of the county for evangelistic work and church extension." Says the Report of 1904: "With increasing population opportunities are constantly being presented for mission work and church extension, but with a sparse exchequer they cannot be embraced." Says the Report of 1903: "The work of the Union could be greatly enlarged if only the churches would place funds at its disposal for the purpose. Aggressive work, however, cannot even be thought of at present, since the immediate matter of concern is to wipe out the present deficiency of £140." This has been the chronic sad refrain. The critical state of things in 1847, which evoked the appeal "What shall be done?" has been mentioned. The appeal did no permanent good. The adverse balance actually reached its highest in the Jubilee year, 1855-56, viz. £219, 16s. 10d., and what seems first to have put



a term to the "lean years" was the impetus set going by the Jubilee celebration. The years of comparative plenty cover the whole period (with three exceptions) from 1857 to 1887. Since that time there has not been a year in which the treasurer could declare a favourable balance. And all through it is noticeable how again and again the officials of the Union have to whip up its liberality.

Thus, as soon as the committee have ventured on a bit of aggressive work in 1865, by a grant of £50 to the District Committee, there comes the fear that it may have to be curtailed unless the associated churches are more generous. Hence an "earnest appeal" in 1866. In 1867 a letter,<sup>1</sup> signed by chairman, secretary, and treasurer, tells how during the last few years the income of the Society has been maintained only by "the continuous labours of preceding Committees"; how the Report of last year (1865-66) shows an adverse balance; how, at a conference held in Stockport in October,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Samuel Morley, of London, felt so deeply "the necessities of the case," that he promised to contribute £50 per annum for three years, provided nine other gentlemen resident in the county would do the like; how he had subsequently<sup>3</sup> altered the terms of his proposal and made the offer conditional on the income being increased to £500; and how the committee, in consequence, "earnestly desiring to extend the usefulness of the Society, feeling also that the honour of our Churches is involved in the matter," were "most anxious to be placed in a position to claim the fulfilment of Mr. Morley's promise on the 31st March next." This specially "earnest appeal" had the desired effect. The income rose to £517, 5s. 5d., nor did it show any decline—much the contrary—for some years. But in 1872 we read, "The state of the funds is still cause of considerable anxiety. If the claims of the Union were set before the churches as systematically as those of other

<sup>1</sup> Of date, Dec. 23, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> The Congregational Union met this month in Manchester. This gave occasion for the conference, which met in Wellington Road, and consisted of pastors and delegates, the Committee, Mr. Morley and Rev. J. H. Wilson of London.

<sup>3</sup> After a committee meeting at Crewe.

societies, there is no reason to doubt that our permanent income would be nearer £1000 than £500." Next year it was £393, 14s. 2½d., with a deficit of £36, 8s. 10d. Another "earnest appeal" was the result. Mr. Joseph Thompson, who succeeded Mr. Dutton as treasurer in 1872, resigned at the end of the year; and, says the Report (April 16, 1873), "It will be for the Union to determine to-day whether the money that is required to pay what is owing to Mr. Thompson, and to meet the calls till Christmas . . . can all be raised, or whether we must be content to pay our debts and make no grants at all till there is money to meet them."

Thereupon Rev. Watson Smith moved the following resolution—"that this Union pledges itself (1) To raise money to meet the present liabilities; (2) To take steps to secure a permanent increase of the income; (3) To hold the collections a little earlier each year, for three or four successive years, in order that the income may reach the treasurer at an earlier part of the financial year."

In pursuance of the first point, Mr. B. S. Bostock at once came forward with a promise of £5, and conducted so vigorous a canvas of the meeting that before it broke up nearly £100 had been obtained—an amount increased subsequently to £125. "High-water mark" can be written against the next five years (1874-78). But in 1877 the treasurer had to warn the Assembly that at the end of the year his surplus would be exhausted, and the Union would then have to face an expenditure of over £700 with a net income under £600; while in 1878 worse than this has actually happened. "The applications have risen at a bound to something like a third more than our income at its highest." Hence a process of cutting down—in some of the cases not unwillingly, but in the majority "with sincere reluctance."

To spare these latter—these "more necessitous cases"—it was "strongly urged by the committee that a general effort should be made to raise the Stated Income by at least £100 per annum." The treasurer said that £100 was not enough for the current year; he must have £125. £100 was promised on the spot (inclusive of £25 by Mr. R. S. Hudson,<sup>1</sup> of Chester),

<sup>1</sup> For three years (1876-78) Mr. Hudson also subscribed £50 per annum.

and the rest was duly forthcoming, all but £4, 9s. 10d. In 1879 the Union joined the Church Aid Home Missionary Society; and, inasmuch as this made a change in the financial procedure of the Union, the steps leading up to it must be noted.

Towards the end of 1873 a lay conference on church finance was held at Birmingham under the auspices of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. To this conference the Cheshire Committee sent four delegates, of whom, however, two only—Mr. Radley, of Congleton, and Mr. Rigby, of Over—were able to attend. The conference, after coming to some “valuable resolutions,” adjourned till June 1874, and eight gentlemen, including Messrs. Rigby and Radley, were deputed to represent Cheshire. The scheme then agreed upon proposed to consolidate all contributions for Home Missionary purposes into one national fund, and the county Unions were asked to consider it. Accordingly, at the annual meeting in 1875, it was duly brought forward—Mr. Henry Lee, of Manchester, attending as deputation from the Congregational Union; and a resolution<sup>1</sup> reached to the effect that the Cheshire Union approves the principle of the scheme without committing itself to all its details; and at the same time advises special attention to the following points—(1) “That the proposed Board be fully representative; and (2) that the Board consist of such numbers as shall make it an efficient Executive.”

The object of the scheme was to equalise the distribution of our resources as a denomination. “It is a most ominous fact,” says the 1876 Report, “that in many of the rural counties of England, Congregational ministers are paid hardly better than day-labourers. This means, unless all history is to be contradicted, that the ministry in those counties will steadily deteriorate, and that again means that those churches will soon cease to wield any influence which it is worth our while to keep alive. It becomes, therefore, the solemn duty of the wealthier counties to reach a helping hand to the poorer ones without delay. How that is best to be done is the question now under discussion.

<sup>1</sup> Moved by the treasurer, Mr. G. S. Wood, seconded by A. H. Cowie, of Birkenhead—carried almost unanimously.

The Congregational Union proposes a scheme that would gather up the whole of the county unions into one great national society, worked by a Central Committee representative of the churches." Shall Cheshire adopt the scheme?

1877. In 1876 nothing was done beyond a further discussion of it  
Sale. occasioned by Rev. F. Barnes's account of the London conference in March. 1877 was the decisive year. On Tuesday evening, April 24th, the annual meeting commenced "with a conference on the new Finance scheme, which was opened by the Rev. A. Mackennal, B.A., of Bowdon, by a paper in favour of the scheme, and by the Rev. Watson Smith, of Wilmslow, by one against it. The debate continued till nine o'clock, and was then adjourned till next day." On Wednesday morning the debate gathered round a resolution and an amendment, the former (moved by Rev. J. T. Maxwell, of Over, seconded by Mr. J. O. Nicholson, of Macclesfield) to the effect that the scheme be accepted in principle "without pronouncing judgment for or against the details of management;" the latter (moved by Mr. G. S. Wood, seconded by Rev. A. Clark) in these terms—"That while heartily sympathising with the object of the proposed Finance Scheme, this Union is unable to see any plan by which the consolidated funds of all the county unions could be administered by a practically representative body, and that the object aimed at would be best secured by each Union retaining the final effective control of its own funds and contributing, as far as possible, to a central fund administered by a representative committee for the purpose of increasing the income of the weaker churches." This was carried by a large majority.

1878. In the autumn of 1877 the Assembly of the Congregational Union (meeting at Leicester) formally adopted the draft scheme of the new Society, as revised and amended by the latest conference held in Derby. It only remained, therefore, for Cheshire to say once for all whether it would join the Society or not. No decision was reached in 1878. Mr. Watson Smith, a staunch Independent of the old school, had followed up the triumphant amendment of 1877 with a notice of motion that "the Cheshire Union, in the conduct and management of its affairs, acknowledges no legislative, administrative, or ruling authority external

to itself, and the churches and subscribers by which it is constituted."

When the time for this came in April 1878, the Assembly decided to consider first a letter from the Rev. Alexander Hannay inviting the Cheshire Union to join the Church Aid Society. If the Union held by its decision of last year, *that* meant a refusal to join; but Rev. E. Morris moved and Mr. G. S. Wood (rather unaccountably) seconded a motion "That the invitation be accepted." This was met by an amendment (which in Mr. Watson Smith's absence Mr. Waters, of Wilmslow, moved and Mr. Joseph Thompson seconded) reaffirming the decision of last year. The outcome of "a long and earnest debate" was adjournment till 1879,<sup>1</sup> when the motion was carried by a large majority, though some wanted the matter suspended for still another year. The connection thus sanctioned took place as soon as possible; five members of the County Union being elected to the council of the Society, of whom two, Mr. G. S. Wood (treasurer) and Mr. Robinson (secretary), were added to its Executive Committee; and the next steps were to begin the new financial year in January 1880 free of debt, and so to increase the income in 1880 as not only to meet all home requirements, but contribute a substantial sum to the general fund. The task was rendered unusually difficult "owing to the stagnation of trade, which reached its extremest limits during the later months of" 1879. However, through the energy and tact of "the treasurer, Mr. G. S. Wood," a greater success was achieved than "the committee ventured to expect." On the 31st December every liability had been met; and as to the estimates of expenditure and income for 1880, Mr. Wood supplied data which entitled the Committee, on the one hand, to ask from the central fund for the use of Cheshire the sum of £700, and, on the other, to pledge a contribution of £800—the additional £100 going to serve the objects of the Society.

The Church Aid Council, for its part, cheerfully voted the former; and the Union, for its part, sent up £805, 15s. 4d. This might seem a great achievement, but not so great when it was seen that £300 came from a single church; and that, while a few

<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Mr. Watson Smith died.



other churches and individuals did well, the great mass did nothing beyond the ordinary. Here, in fact, lay the root of weakness—as time made only too clear. “But the theory of Christian finance,” says the Report of 1881, “based as it is on the principle that money is a talent and giving a privilege, knows no difference between rich churches and poor churches, but claims the widow’s mite as scrupulously and counts it as precious as the rich gifts of the great. And this is worldly policy as well as divine principle, for the secret of all sound, and, therefore, of all successful finance is to depend, not on a rich man here and a rich church there, but upon the loyal, Christian faithfulness found over the wide, broad area of Christ’s Church. In that way alone can we hope to enlist popular enthusiasm, which is the life and soul of Christian enterprises. Is it too much, then, to ask, as your Committee most earnestly do ask, that every church and every member of this Union order their gifts according to the largeness of the appeal, which is not for the exigencies of Cheshire alone, but embraces the home mission field over the entire length and breadth of England? This is a question which affects us all, but most closely does it touch the ministry, in whose hands chiefly it lies whether the appeal is to be a success or a failure. It affects them in all their interests from the highest to the lowest, because on this great scheme of Church Aid the future of English Congregationalism is staked. Let it fail, and let the inevitable march of events crush out the life of our rural churches while we are lukewarm witnesses, and the future of our cherished system will be as contemptible as its past has been glorious. Already, owing to the very cause that holds in Cheshire—viz., the indifference, or rather the want of all consciousness of the magnitude of this movement on the part of nine-tenths of our ministers and church members, the Society, modest as its operations are, has been compelled to face the possibility of a debt of £3000 on this year’s proceedings. This fact alone should compel each minister and each church to strain every nerve that next year’s income shall exceed this year’s, and should lead the Union to keep the most vigilant eye on its expenditure.”

This eloquent plea<sup>1</sup> was called forth by the evident selfishness

<sup>1</sup> Written by the Secretary, Mr. Robinson.

which promised £700 for 1881 and — asked for the same amount back again,<sup>1</sup> letting not one drop leak “through the iron boundaries of Cheshire to refresh the parching lands beyond.”

How far the Union rallied to the plea a brief statement will suffice to show. In 1882 a contribution of £60<sup>2</sup> was spared for the Central Fund; in 1883, £100;<sup>3</sup> in 1884, £200;<sup>4</sup> in 1885, £40;<sup>5</sup> in 1886, £140;<sup>6</sup> in 1887, £140;<sup>7</sup> in 1888, £140;<sup>8</sup> in 1889, £100;<sup>9</sup> in 1890, £100;<sup>10</sup> in 1891, £100;<sup>11</sup> in 1892, £120.<sup>12</sup> Then we come to this (1893):—

“It was with the deepest regret that your Executive, at its meeting in January, could not see its way to pledge the Union to a grant of £100 or £120 to the central office this year. They have as yet promised nothing. . . .” Nor, as a matter of fact, has anything been given ever since. Bowdon went on contributing for another three years.<sup>13</sup> Then, in 1896, Marple earmarked £5, 19s. 7d. for the fund. But the Union found itself sinking deeper and deeper into a slough of insolvency—a deficit in 1892 of £92, 17s., in 1893 of £56, 14s. 7d., in 1894 of £127, 4s. 2d., in 1895 of £114, 9s. 5d., in 1896 of £278, 8s. 9d., and in 1897 of £239, 8s. 2d.—notwithstanding special donations collected by the chairman, Mr. W. Lees, amounting to £163, 13s. 6d. Nor has it got quite clear even yet.

There has been no lack of “prodding” on the part of the Executive and others. In 1893, for example, “On the motion of Mr. Lindsay (Liscard), seconded by Mr. J. Smale, it was resolved that ministers and delegates present pledge themselves to bring before the churches the urgent needs and claims of the Church Aid Society, with the view of wiping out the adverse balance against the Union, and sending, as in former years, £100

<sup>1</sup> The discovery of a source from which more might be derived seems to have evoked a sudden outbreak of claims for more.

<sup>2</sup> Bowdon sent £100.

<sup>4</sup> Bowdon sent £195.

<sup>6</sup> Bowdon sent £100.

<sup>8</sup> Bowdon sent £147, 10s.

<sup>10</sup> Bowdon sent £66, 14s.

<sup>12</sup> Bowdon sent £60, 10s.

<sup>3</sup> Bowdon sent £90.

<sup>5</sup> Bowdon sent £115.

<sup>7</sup> Bowdon sent £272, 10s.

<sup>9</sup> Bowdon sent £66, 14s.

<sup>11</sup> Bowdon sent £60, 10s.

<sup>13</sup> 1893, £61; 1894, £87, 13s. 2d.; 1895, £63.

to the central office." On this occasion £30 in money and promises was received during the meeting by the treasurer ; but, nevertheless, the adverse balance went up.

Then a new experiment was tried. In 1890 Mr. Josiah Smale had moved to appoint a sub-committee to consider the question of having a paid secretary, but a majority of the Assembly did not support him. Now in 1894, however, it was proposed by the treasurer (Mr. Joseph Wood) and carried unanimously, " That this Assembly empowers the Executive Committee to appoint an assistant secretary, at a small stipend, for the purpose especially of canvassing for subscriptions and organising collections, and that a special fund be raised for the purpose." These duties were undertaken by Rev. J. W. Fortnum, of Middlewich, and proved thankless enough. By the end of 1894 he had collected £238, 13s.<sup>1</sup> from seven places (including £110, 8s. 6d. from Bowdon). The amount fell to £73, 18s. in 1895, though collected from eighteen places. In 1896 five places yielded him £5, 2s. ; and in 1897 £8, 5s. is given as coming from Northwich only—while at the same time the balance reached its culminating terror. There can be no doubt that Mr. Fortnum did his best, and probably the best any one could have done. But, as the event made clear, he was called upon to attempt the impossible. In the nature of the case he must needs confine himself to Congregationalists ; and these, if disposed to contribute at all, would usually prefer to contribute through the channel of their own particular church, or, if not disposed to contribute, would be apt to excuse themselves even more readily to an outside agent than to one on the spot.

Some degree of sustained enthusiasm and systematic effort are what is demanded. These, as experience has repeatedly shown, have seldom failed to elicit a due response within the churches. Thus the financial position reported in 1900 was better than it had been for a long time ; and the reason is, that the churches to some extent had been roused and canvassed by their own leaders. At the entreaty of the committee, ministers and delegates charged themselves with this work ; auxiliaries were formed ; deputations were invited to pay informatory visits ; local col-

<sup>1</sup> According to the Report for 1895.

lectors were appointed <sup>1</sup>—with a result which called forth “devout thankfulness,” and even the hope “that the day may not be far distant when we shall be able to send from our abundance a portion to help those counties which suffer lack.”

This hope has faded, because the organisations which gave rise to it have been inadequately worked or not generally adopted throughout the county. Nor is it likely that they will be until the conviction has taken hold of ministers and churches that home missions rank with foreign in importance, and are as deserving of enthusiastic support.

<sup>1</sup> A comparison of the 1900 with the 1897 Report reveals a considerable increase of collectors and personal subscribers. One method in use at Liscard since 1893 recalls the “penny a week” custom of an earlier day—I mean the use of (weekly) halfpenny envelopes. The proceeds of these for thirteen years (1893-1905) amount to £191, 15s. 3d.—an average per annum of £14, 15s. 10d.

### III.—AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS

IN the third Report, dated October 29, 1811, it is remarked that "an attack has been made in the higher house of the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom on the religious liberties of the people of England." The reference is to Lord Sidmouth's fatuous proposal, made on May 9, "that, in future, no person should be allowed to obtain a certificate as a minister unless he were recommended by six respectable housekeepers of his own denomination." His lordship, in bringing forward his proposal, pretended anxiety to guard the sacred office against improper persons—such as "cobblers, tailors, pig-drivers and chimney-sweepers"—many of whom had invaded it. He thought the Dissenters might be expected to thank him for a measure which aimed thus to benefit them by emphasising the dignity of the ministerial profession. But, strange to say, the ingrates began at once to agitate against the intended kindness; and agitated to such good effect that when, on the 21st of May, its author moved the second reading of his Bill, he found himself practically alone. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, while expressing approval of the Bill, "considered it unwise to press it against the wishes of those who were the best judges of their own interests." It was, in short, negatived without a division; and, moreover, proved to be a bad move for the privileged Church, inasmuch as it led three days later to the formation of "The Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty"—a society whose avowed object was not only to protect the liberties already won, but also to secure the full possession of those still withheld. To a great extent it made good its word. In less than twelve months it had succeeded in clearing the statute-book of the Five Mile and Conventicle Acts; and likewise of the Act which compelled Quakers to take what they deemed unlawful oaths. In 1813 Unitarians,



largely by its means, were relieved of the disabilities which had exposed them hitherto "to the severest penalties, next to death, which can be inflicted upon any human being." Then, in conjunction with other agencies, it initiated a movement to get rid of the Test and Corporation Acts, whose malign action had been partially checked only by the annual passing since 1727 of an "Act of Indemnity" for those dissenters who held office in despite of them; and this movement also achieved its triumph on April 28, 1828—a red-letter day for Nonconformists; nay, rather for religion in England. One by one other grievances were wiped out in the years following. Thus in 1836 a Bill passed both Houses without a division which secured to Dissenters for the first time "the uniform registration of births, deaths and marriages, and appointed public officers for the purpose of carrying out its provisions." In the same year the Marriages Bill relieved Dissenters from the necessity of being married "in the parish churches belonging to the Establishment, and with no service but one to which they conscientiously objected"; in 1868 a struggle which had extended through more than thirty years was brought to a close by Mr. Gladstone when he carried a Bill for the abolition of compulsory church rates; in 1871 the Religious Tests, which had barred out conscientious dissenters from the national universities of Oxford and Cambridge, were done away by the same champion of justice; and in 1880 the Burial Law Amendment Act enabled a Nonconformist minister to officiate in a churchyard—a right of value more for what it implies than actually bestows.

Emancipation, it has been truly said, was the keynote of the nineteenth century. In 1807 the United Kingdom abolished its slave trade, and in 1833 liberated the slaves in its colonies at a cost of twenty millions sterling; in 1829 it enacted the Catholic Relief Bill; in 1832 the first great Reform Bill gave a voice to many citizens who had been taxed but could not vote; in 1833 an Act regulating the work of children in factories opened for the "common people" an era of expanding freedom from social evils; in 1858, by the admission of Jews to Parliament, a final (though not *the* final) blow was struck at the principle that religious belief must be used for a test of political claims; and in

1869 the Disestablishment of the Irish Church began that deliverance of religion from the injurious patronage of the State which is sure to complete itself in the near future. Thus, within the lifetime of our Union, the "unending battle for freedom" has achieved not a few of its most signal triumphs; and if Nonconformists have been the chief gainers by them, let it be remembered that they have been also the chief fighters for them. And they have contended not for their own rights only; they have contended no less strenuously for the rights of all. Their spirit has been "a public spirit." Men like Robert Hall, and John Forster, and John Wilks, and Thomas Binney, and Edward Miall, and R. W. Dale, and Enoch Mellor, and Alexander Mackennal were patriots as much as Nonconformists—nay, were patriots of an unusually lofty aim and outlook, because inspired by principles which lay at the heart of their Nonconformity. It is something for praise that our (Congregational) churches were by no means the last to recognise this fact, and to answer the call of such leaders, and to press after them towards the goal.

Nor have they been content to work for "civil and religious liberty." It is matter for equal praise that our churches have become intellectually freer within themselves—have thrown off, to a great extent, the dead hand of prejudices which pressed heavily upon them a century ago. It seems safe to say, for instance, that, though loyal as ever to the essential gospel of the grace of God, we are no longer bound to a theology which narrowed that grace to the few, which left vast multitudes to the chance of uncovenanted mercies, which darkened the love of God by lurid pictures of an everlasting material hell—a theology, moreover, which in the name of faith forbade reason to deal honestly with "doubts," or to accept the demonstrated truths of science, or to search the Scriptures with a single eye to an impartial and increasing knowledge of their real history and meaning. We have come out into an ampler and purer air. A "Rivulet" controversy,<sup>1</sup> a "Davidson" controversy,<sup>2</sup> an "Essay and Review" controversy,<sup>2</sup> a "Leicester Conference" controversy<sup>3</sup> have almost ceased to be possible. We have learnt, or at least are fast learning, to suspect and shun the

<sup>1</sup> 1856.<sup>2</sup> In the sixties.<sup>3</sup> 1877.

dogmatic temper. We are satisfied to bring our questions to the test of "Jesus only." We have found in His revelation of the Divine Fatherhood—more deeply understood—rest for mind and heart, an easy yoke, an escape from the slavery of fear into the glad liberty of the children of God.

Nor are we bound any longer by that one-sided conception of the Church and the world which made the former a sheltered garden and the latter a wilderness given over to evils so ubiquitous and mighty and subtle, that the only safety of the Christian lay in keeping clear of it altogether. We see that the world of nature, and man with all his manifold activities, is God's home as well as the Church, and that the proper function of the Church is to nourish that faith which can overcome the world, or the spirit of selfishness, whether it exist within the Church or without.

Nor again are we any longer bound by the fancy that a Church, in order to realise its idea, must be fashioned according to the exact pattern of a Church contained in the New Testament. A better acquaintance with the New Testament has taught us to seek there for principles, not rules. We believe now that the Congregational form of a church is the best, not because the details of its structure and government correspond to what has been laid down expressly by Jesus or His apostles, but because it is the natural form of a church, the form which evolves itself by an inner necessity whenever a number of persons are united to their common Master and to one another by the self-same spirit. For that spirit is creative at once of a brotherhood of equal members, and endows each member with his own measure of grace or manner of gift, and inspires all alike to co-operate for the perceiving and fulfilling of "the holy and acceptable and perfect Will of God." This is how the New Testament churches came to be what they were, and their organisation followed the same line. It was spontaneous—not a rigid scheme imposed upon them from without, but something developed from within by the needs of the situation; and therefore not the same everywhere, but differing according to the differences of environment—comparatively crude and simple in one place, as in Thessa-

lonica and Corinth, or more advanced and complex in another, as in Philippi and Rome. What should be, or should not be, in the sphere of church order was determined by the question how a church could more effectually edify itself and do its work. We have come to see this, and the effect has been to tighten our hold on the congregational idea of a church as all-important; and, at the same time, to show us clearly that the church is free to regulate its worship, discipline, or government in whatever way is best adapted to meet the demands of its inner life.

Nor, finally, are we any longer bound by the fear of losing our proper independence if we cease to be insular. There were those who shrank from the proposal of a Union because they thought that the blessing of concerted action might be too dearly bought. They made a fetish of Independence. They would have each church stand alone, work alone, and even die alone—better die alone than risk the loss of any jot or tittle of its right to absolute self-control. The lessons of experience—the dreary annals of independency during many decades of the eighteenth century—were lost upon them. They did not use the phrase “survival of the fittest,” but it expressed their theory—that if churches are “fit” to live they will live, and ought not to live if they need assistance. Selfishness under another name was erected into a sacred principle.

No wonder, then, that county unions came into existence slowly and sporadically. There were eight formed before our own—the oldest (Hampshire) dating from 1781. Four years after our own came the Herts Union, and at intervals during the next twenty-six years some nine or ten more were formed. Then, indeed, the minutes of the Congregational Union for 1836 give a list of “county and district associations” in England which totals thirty-nine—apparently a larger number than exist at present. But it is explained that the list “includes two or three Associations in which our Baptist brethren are united with the Congregational churches.” It is further said—what is worth noting: “That many of the Associations have been formed irrespective of topographical boundaries, usually including only those churches which by their local position could conveniently unite together. Thus it will be found, in several instances, that the number of

churches in each Association falls far below "the number actually existing," "and that nearly half our churches are not included in any Association whatever."

To this last statement Cheshire offered an exception, for the Union is credited with thirty-one churches, and there were perhaps not more than these in the county.<sup>1</sup> But how significant the statement is of the hesitating slowness with which the churches were willing to escape from their isolation! A similar hesitancy made the success of the Union for all the churches of England and Wales, established in 1830, an open question at first. But wisdom was justified by her works, and gradually inculcated her lesson that union is strength. Long before the end of the century every county had its Association (or Associations) commensurate with itself; every Association has been consolidated under rules which, on the whole, are practically identical; and in every case experience has decided in favour of the change. The advantages for self-discipline, for mutual knowledge and encouragement, for the extension of timely aid to the weak, for concentrated public action in matters of general interest, for conserving and directing spiritual energies which might otherwise run to waste, are felt to be a blessing that exceeds all actual or possible drawbacks. And now at length the Associations have become a "noun collective." Through the revised constitution of September 1904 they have freely entered into a confederative relationship with one another of far-reaching scope. They elect "the council of three hundred," which may be described as the central organ of expression for the mind and will of the churches throughout the land. In this way the churches are knit up into an ideal unity, and can hope to co-operate for common ends with a sureness, with a thoroughness, with a comprehensiveness, and with resources impossible before. No doubt there are dangers in the new order—dangers requiring to be carefully foreseen, measured and avoided; but none of them is vital, so long as the "apple of our eye"—the individual church's ultimate responsibility to Christ alone for its life and work—remains untouched. On the other hand, in view of what has been effected by union for the

<sup>1</sup> In 1847 there were only thirty-seven, including four connected with the Lancashire Union.



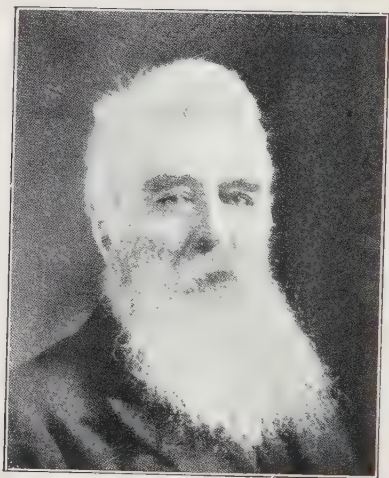
individual church in the past ; in view of the practical necessities which can be met only by union in the present ; and in view of the demand for unity which the spirit of Christ is making upon all churches as one of their most urgent duties in the immediate future—we may rejoice that the movement towards union has gone so far among ourselves ; we may not fear its further advance ; and we may believe that the fruits of it will be increasingly blessed.

## PART II

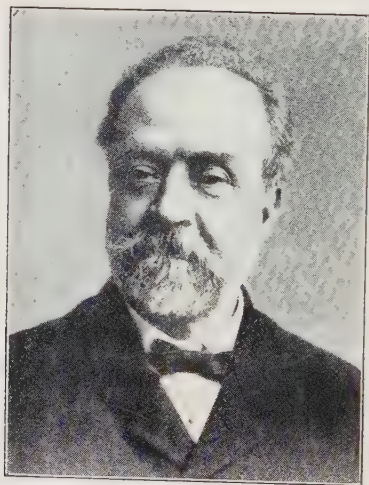
ACCOUNT OF THE CHURCHES AND  
STATIONS IN THE UNION







Rev. Dr A. MACKENNAL.



Mr. G. STANLEY WOOD.



# ACCOUNT OF CHURCHES AND STATIONS IN THE UNION

## CHAIRMEN OF THE CHESHIRE UNION

No minutes have been preserved for the years before 1849, and till these begin there is no record of Chairman.

|       | CHAIRMAN.  | PLACE.                         | DATE.     |
|-------|--|--------------------------------|-----------|
| 1849. | Mr. Richard Dutton (Middlewich)  | Sandbach . . . .               | April 25  |
| 1850. | Mr. Ibbotson Walker (Bowdon Downs) . . . .   | Bowdon . . . .                 | " 25      |
| 1851. | Mr. R. Dutton . . . .  |                                |           |
| 1852. | " " . . . .  | Over . . . .                   | " 24      |
| 1853. | " " . . . .  | Wilmslow . . . .               | " 28, 29  |
| 1854. | " " . . . .  | Chester . . . .                | " 28      |
| 1855. | Mr. James Rhodes (Tintwistle) . . . .  | Crewe . . . .                  | " 27      |
|       | Rev. James Turner, who insisted on retiring in favour of Mr. W. Potts (Macclesfield) . . . . | Crewe . . . .                  | " 25      |
| 1856. | Mr. James Rhodes . . . .   |                                |           |
| 1857. | Mr Edward Southam (Sale) . . . .   | Tintwistle . . . .             | " 23, 24  |
| 1858. | Mr. James Rathbone (Townley St. Macclesfield) . . . .  | Sale . . . .                   | " 22      |
|       |  | Macclesfield . . . .           | " 21      |
| 1859. | Mr. Hope (Chester) . . . .   |                                |           |
| 1860. | Mr Rathbone (Macclesfield) . . . .   | Chester (Queen St.) . . . .    | " 27      |
| 1861. | Mr. Samuel Rigby (Bowdon) . . . .  | Stockport (Hanover) . . . .    | " 18      |
| 1862. | Mr. Joseph Thompson (Bowdon) . . . .   | Bowdon . . . .                 | " 17      |
| 1863. | " " " " . . . .  | Hyde (Zion) . . . .            | " 24      |
| 1864. | Mr. Samuel Rigby (Warrington) . . . .  | Birkenhead (Oxton Rd.) . . . . | " 22      |
| 1865. | Mr. Joseph Thompson (Bowdon) . . . .   | Macclesfield (Roe St.) . . . . | " 20      |
| 1866. | Rev. P. C. Barker, M.A., LL.B. (Chester) . . . .   | Sale . . . .                   | " 26      |
|       | [Instead of Rev. J. Marshall, of Over, appointed at the previous meeting.]                   | Chester (Queen St.) . . . .    | " 19      |
| 1867. | Rev. R. Alliot, B.A. (Knutsford) [First who is said to have delivered an address.]           |                                |           |
| 1868. | Rev. A. Wilson, B.A. (Stockport)   | Knutsford . . . .              | " 16, 17  |
| 1869. | Rev. Watson Smith (Wilmslow) . . . .   | Stockport (Hanover) . . . .    | " 29      |
| 1870. | Mr. Joseph Thompson (Bowdon) . . . .   | Wilmslow . . . .               | " 21      |
|       | " " " " . . . .  | Bowdon . . . .                 | " 27      |
|       | [Adjourned meeting.]   | Crewe . . . .                  | Sept. 28] |
| 1871. | Rev. J. Johns, B.A. (Northwich) . . . .  | Northwich . . . .              | April 26  |
| 1872. | Rev. P. W. Darnton, B.A. (Chester)   | Chester (Queen St.) . . . .    | " 24      |
| 1873. | Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A. (Cheadle)   | Cheadle . . . .                | " 16      |
| 1874. | Mr. Richard Dutton (Middlewich)  | Middlewich . . . .             | " 22      |
| 1875. | Rev. F. Barnes, B.A. (Birkenhead)  | Birkenhead (Oxton Rd.) . . . . | " 21      |
| 1876. | Rev. T. Hartley (Marple) . . . .   | Marple . . . .                 | " 26      |
| 1877. | Rev. E. Morris (Sale) . . . .  | Sale . . . .                   | " 24, 25  |

|       | CHAIRMAN.   | PLACE.                         | DATE.       |
|-------|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1878. | Rev. G. J. Allen, B.A. (Macclesfield)             | Macclesfield . . .             | April 9, 10 |
| 1879. | Mr. G. S. Wood (Bowdon) . . .                     | Lymm . . .                     | " 22, 23    |
| 1880. | Rev. Joseph Moore (Congleton) . . .               | Rock Ferry . . .               | Mar. 23, 24 |
| 1881. | Mr. W. Milne (Bowdon) . . .                       | { Stockport (Wellington Rd.) } | " 29, 30    |
| 1882. | Rev. G. K. Walker (Middlewich)                    | Hyde (Union St.) . . .         | " 23        |
| 1883. | Mr. B. S. Bostock (Haslington) . . .              | Bowdon . . .                   | April 4     |
| 1884. | Rev. Absalom Clark (Stockport) . . .              | Crewe . . .                    | " 4         |
| 1885. | Rev. T. Robinson, B.A. (Hyde) . . .               | Congleton . . .                | " 15        |
| 1886. | Mr. Thos. Rigby (Chester) . . .                   | Middlewich . . .               | " 7         |
| 1887. | Rev. A. Mackennal, B.A., D.D. (Bowdon) . . .      | { Cheadle . . . }              | Mar. 23     |
| 1888. | Mr. Samuel Rigby, J.P. (Chester)                  | Chester . . .                  | April 11    |
| 1889. | Rev. T. W. Pinn, M.A. (Stockport)                 | Wilmslow . . .                 | Mar. 27     |
| 1890. | Mr. Richard Dutton, jun. (Lymm)                   | Sale . . .                     | April 16    |
| 1891. | Rev. H. Harries, M.A. (Stockport)                 | Marple . . .                   | " 15        |
| 1892. | Mr. Jos. Wood (Wilmslow) . . .                    | Liscard . . .                  | " 7         |
| 1893. | Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A. (Cheadle)                  | Birkenhead . . .               | Mar. 23     |
| 1894. | Rev. C. A. Mines, B.A. (Rock Ferry) . . .         | { Northwich . . . }            | April 5     |
| 1895. | Mr. Algernon Fletcher (Northwich)                 | Macclesfield . . .             | " 4         |
| 1896. | Rev. J. H. Gwyther, B.A. (Liscard)                | { Stockport (Wellington Rd.) } | " 15        |
| 1897. | Mr. Wm. Lees, J.P. (Stockport) . . .              | Bowdon . . .                   | " 7         |
| 1898. | Rev. F. J. Powicke, M.A., Ph.D. (Hatherlow) . . . | { Rock Ferry . . . }           | Mar. 30     |
| 1899. | Mr. Jos. Thompson, J.P., LL.D., (Wilmslow) . . .  | { Hatherlow . . . }            | April 12    |
| 1900. | Mr. Thos. Huxley (Malpas) . . .                   | Crewe . . .                    | " 4         |
| 1901. | Rev. F. Carter (Knutsford) . . .                  | Hyde (Union St.) . . .         | Mar. 27     |
| 1902. | Mr. S. Maskery, J.P. (Congleton)                  | { Macclesfield (Park Green) }  | April 10    |
| 1903. | Rev. Joseph Johnson (Ashton-on-Mersey) . . .      | { Cheadle . . . }              | " 8         |
| 1904. | Mr. Arthur A. Haworth (Bowdon).                   | Chester . . .                  | " 13        |
| 1905. | Rev. W. A. Blake (Stockport) . . .                | Wilmslow . . .                 | " 13        |
| 1906. | Mr. G. S. Wood (Cheadle) . . .                    | { Stockport (Wellington Rd.) } | " 5         |

## GENERAL SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

### SECRETARIES.

- (1 and 2) 1806. Rev. Ebenezer White, of Chester, and Rev. William Evans, of Stockport.

Mr. Evans wrote the first four Reports—Oct. 1808, Nov. 1809, Oct. 1811, Jan. 1813.

(Mr. White died in May 1811. Mr. Evans died in Sept. 1814.)

- (3) Rev. John Reynolds (successor to Mr. White in Queen Street Chapel, Chester) 1814, wrote the 5th Report, July.
- (4) Rev. Nathaniel Pugsley, Stockport, wrote 7th Report (Nov. 1816).
- (5) The 8th Report—Oct. 1820—is signed by the committee. There was at this date neither treasurer nor secretary, but the meeting appointed
- (6) Rev. James Turner, who held the office for more than twenty years (see his Jubilee Review, p. 11).
- (7) Rev. S. Bowen (Townley Street, Macclesfield), some time before 1847, held office till 1852.
- (8) Rev. John Robinson (Middlewich), 1853.
- (9) Rev. D. G. Watt, M.A. (Northwich), 1854-61.
- (10) Rev. W. B. Macwilliam (Middlewich), 1861-66.
- (11) Rev. E. Morris (Sale), 1866-70. In the latter year Mr. W. Milne (Bowdon) was made assistant for the ensuing year.
- (12) Rev. T. Robinson, B.A. (Hyde), 1871-84.
- (13) Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A. (Cheadle), 1885-89.
- (14) Rev. A. Scott (Sale), 1890-92.
- (15) Rev. H. Harries, M.A. (Stockport), 1893.
- (16) Rev. F. Carter, 1894.

### TREASURERS.

Mr. T. Jones, of Chester, and Mr. J. Brown, of Stockport.

Mr. Brown and Mr. Clubbe.

W. Cross.

W. Cross, who was still in office in 1841 (see Report for 1842).

E. Gerrard, some time before 1847. James Rhodes, 1848-53.

(A sub-committee was appointed in 1853 to seek a treasurer.)  
R. Dutton, 1855-71.

Mr. Joseph Thompson, 1872.

Mr. G. Stanley Wood (Bowdon), 1873-86.

Mr. Joseph Wood (Wilmslow), 1887-90.

Mr. Richard Dutton, jun. (Lymm), 1891.

Mr. Joseph Wood, 1892-97.

Mr. Thos. H. Lees (Stockport), 1898-

## NOTE ON METHOD OF ELECTING SECRETARY.

In 1871 Rev. E. Morris, at his resignation, nominated a sub-committee (of six) to recommend some one to fill his place. Mr. Robinson appears to have been nominated and elected at once, since in 1872 he was thanked for his services and requested to continue in the office.

In 1885 there occurs this minute: "The balloting for the office of secretary, in place of Rev. T. Robinson, resulted in favour of the Rev. H. Harries, secretary *pro tem.*; but Mr. Harries declining to accept the office, a sub-committee (of three) was formed to make a nomination to the Assembly. The Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A., of Cheadle, having been nominated by the same, he was carried unanimously."

In 1890, on the retirement of Mr. Paull, a sub-committee of seven was formed to present a name, and nominated Rev. A. Scott, who was forthwith elected by the Assembly.

In 1893 the retiring secretary nominated a sub-committee of five to bring forward a name. Two were recommended—Rev. F. Carter and Rev. H. Harries. The latter was then elected by ballot.

In 1894 a similar sub-committee recommended Mr. Carter as successor to Mr. Harries.

## DISTRICTS

A SUFFICIENTLY convenient framework for setting forth our account of the churches and stations within the Union is ready to hand in its scheme of five districts; and this we propose to adopt—as well as, on the whole, the order in which they, and the churches belonging to them, are arranged.

The division into districts began in 1848—when two districts were formed, a Northern and a Southern—each to meet annually.

The first of these District meetings were held simultaneously in October 1848—that for the Northern Division of the county at Hatherlow, and that for the Southern Division at Minshull.

The first secretaries respectively were the Rev. J. T. Jesson (Runcorn) and Rev. Thomas Coward (Hatherlow)—the latter replaced soon by the Rev. R. G. Milne (Tintwistle).

In 1865 a division into five Districts took place—viz., Chester, Nantwich, Macclesfield, Stockport and Bowdon.

In 1880 Crewe was substituted for Nantwich.

In 1888 the Stockport and Macclesfield districts were amalgamated, and a fifth district was formed out of the churches in the Wirral.

Besides the ordinary (as a rule quarterly) meetings the Wirral district has established an annual-day for special advocacy of the claims of the Union.

*N.B.*—(\*) This mark where it occurs against the name of a place = extinct, or not now in the Union.

### BOWDON DISTRICT.

#### SECRETARIES.

|                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Rev. E. Morris . . .         | 1865-1866 |
| Rev. R. Alliot, B.A. . .     | 1866-1868 |
| Rev. J. Johns, B.A. . .      | 1868-1871 |
| Rev. Edward Morris . . .     | 1871-1872 |
| Rev. J. Johns, B.A. . .      | 1872-1880 |
| Mr. R. Dutton, jun. . .      | 1880-1892 |
| Rev. F. Carter . . .         | 1892-1894 |
| Mr. E. P. Williams . . .     | 1894-1896 |
| Rev. T. Hallett Williams . . | 1896-1903 |
| Rev. W. D. Thomas . . .      | 1903- —   |



### Ashton-on-Mersey.

At the first meeting of the Bowdon District Committee (August 17, 1865) reference was made to several places in the district in which there was a lack of evangelistic effort. One of these was Ashton.

At its second meeting (August 28) the sum of £25 was granted for the support of an evangelist in Ashton, Northenden and places adjacent<sup>1</sup>—on condition that what more might be requisite was forthcoming from other quarters, and that the Sale Church superintended the expenditure. No use was found for this before 1867, when Ashton became a sharer of it with Hart Lane. In 1868 (March 16) Rev. E. Morris, minister of Sale, asked in the name of his church that “a grant for Ashton and Northenden of £50 instead of £25 be recommended to the Executive.”<sup>2</sup> In September Mr. Morris stated that an agent had been engaged for Ashton and had been at work for some weeks.

He remained till 1870. At Ashton services were held in a cottage; at Hart Lane in a good school<sup>3</sup> rented on “very favourable terms.” In 1870 the former had an evening congregation averaging 24 adults and 12 children; the latter one averaging 30 adults and 20 children. Sunday schools were established at both places, while a Bible Class at Ashton was balanced by a week-night service at Hart Lane. In the summer the evangelist preached regularly in the open air, and throughout the year he was engaged in house to house visitation. After his removal the Sunday schools and cottage services were carried on as before, and it was proposed to form a church at Ashton,<sup>4</sup> but this did not come off till 1875. In the summer of 1872, however, Mr. Morris and one or two of his people built a schoolroom at their own expense and opened it as a Sunday school and for public worship.<sup>5</sup> Another evangelist was obtained, with the result that 1874 could report that the Sunday school had 5 teachers and 60 scholars more than last year and a congregation more than doubled. Mr. Barnes was the name of the evangelist, and his labours continued to be so successful that in 1875 the congregation is spoken of as “growing rapidly into an

<sup>1</sup> £50 to each of the District Committees had been allocated by the Union in April for evangelistic work.

<sup>2</sup> In April the Union granted £50 for Ashton, Hart Lane, and Northenden.

<sup>3</sup> It seated 100, and the Ashton Cottage, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Hart Lane disappears.

<sup>5</sup> In April 1873 there were 7 teachers, 77 scholars, 50 in congregation. The accommodation is given as 200, but later schedules give 180.



ASHTON-ON-MERSEY



LYMM.



important community"—able "with a little help to sustain a settled minister." So far it had been superintended by Sale; but it now became "an Independent Church"—with 25 members at the end of six months,<sup>1</sup> and every prospect of developing soon into "a self-supporting and even strong church."<sup>2</sup> In 1876 the church was admitted to the Union. Early in 1877 Mr. Barnes removed to Royton, near Oldham, having won for himself as "man and minister" a very general respect. Before the end of the year—though not before the congregation had begun to suffer—Rev. Joseph Johnson, of Bermondsey, settled. He came "highly recommended." Nearly thirty years have passed, and he has long since outlived all need of "letters of commendation." He is honoured for his work's sake and beloved for his own. No more faithful or self-sacrificing ministry has been known in the county. A prolonged period of bad trade made progress difficult at first; and a permanent hindrance lay in the inconveniences of the place—too small and dingy as well as too near other places of worship. Once and again this fact was urged upon the people as a reason for instant action. But it was not till 1887 that the decision to "arise and build" was definitely taken.

Friends connected with the place guaranteed £500, and this was raised by sales of work "in the course of the next two or three years." By 1891 outside help had increased the sum in hand to £880, and by 1892 to £925. Then in 1893 the new chapel—described as "a beautiful structure seated for 350"—became a visible reality; and, after the opening services in July, had upon it a debt of only £700.<sup>3</sup> Five years later the whole of this had been cleared; and the church was "giving its attention to the erection of new schools"—a project carried out in 1902 at a cost of £1680. Including a debt of £257 upon the organ this great effort left the church with a burden of nearly £900. A bazaar, held in 1904, reduced the burden to £234, and a sale of work in 1905 reduced it to £180. Here it stands, or rather is on its way to vanish, if we may judge from the past. £4000 expended on chapel and school and organ in fifteen years by "a small and certainly not rich church" is—as the Report remarks—"a noteworthy achievement." Nor let it be forgotten that, while credit is due to the people generally, the chief praise belongs to the pastor. Considering how little he has received year after year, he would have abandoned the work long since had he thought mainly of his own interest; but he has been willing

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* in April 1876.

<sup>2</sup> £40 grant—the minister's stipend was £150. Mr. Crighton is mentioned as a financial, and other, mainstay.

<sup>3</sup> The total cost was £3000.

"to spend and be spent" in a service of love. His people know this, and may surely be expected now at length to embody their affection in something like an adequate stipend.

As to the spiritual side of things, the following may be quoted from the last Report: "The church work has improved in all departments: the church roll is larger, the congregations are growing, the Sunday school is full; other societies, such as the Band of Hope for children, Social Evening and Debating Society for youths, Pleasant Sunday and Monday afternoons for men and women, and Bible Class for all are in full work and well attended. A grant of £15—*i.e.* £5 less than last year—is asked and recommended." This final item points to the near approach of complete independence.

*Grants.*—1867 (with Hart Lane and Northenden), £25. 1868-69 (with Hart Lane), £50. 1870 (with Hart Lane), £40. 1871 (Ashton alone), £50, from date of settlement of minister. 1872-75, £30. 1876-78, £40. 1879, £35 or £40. 1880-82, £40. 1883-93, £30. 1894-96, £25. 1897-1901, £20. 1902, £20, plus "challenge grant" of £10 on condition that £15 be raised to complete the amount due to the minister. 1903, £20, plus £10 from the special fund on condition that not less than £110 be paid to the minister. 1904-05, £20. 1906, £15.

### Baguley.

The attention of the Bowdon District Committee was turned on Baguley at its first meeting (August 17, 1865) as among the places in need of "evangelistic effort."

Bowdon Downs took it up and built a chapel there in 1869. In 1872 (October 20), a church was formed, and the Rev. John Simson became pastor.<sup>1</sup> He retired in 1887<sup>2</sup> when the church found itself no longer able to support a resident minister. In 1892, and for some years after, Baguley appears as an out-station of Sale, but this only means that the Sale minister undertook a certain degree of general oversight and "came on the second Sunday afternoon of each month to conduct the service and administer the Lord's Supper."

There has been no stated minister since Mr. Simson, and the services have been conducted mainly by lay preachers from the Association in Manchester.

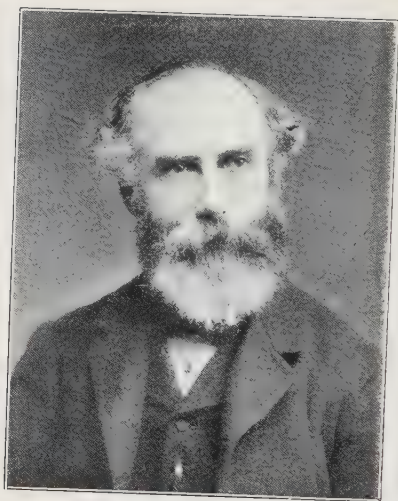
A prominent helper of Baguley, among others, in the early days was the late Mr. W. Milne, Chairman of the Union in 1881, and always its hearty friend. He came to Bowdon in 1856, at the age of thirty-two, and resided there till his death in 1904, after

<sup>1</sup> The church joined the Union in April 1874.

<sup>2</sup> See 1888 Report.







MR. ABRAHAM HAWORTH.



MR. WILLIAM MILNE.

an illness lasting fourteen years. Widely known throughout Cheshire as an ardent Liberal politician and effective platform speaker, he ever kept a place in his heart for the claims of the village churches—Mobberley, Partington, Heyhead, Bucklow Hill, and Baguley.

He was a welcome visitor at these places, where he often preached and gave zest to the services by his "love and knowledge of music, combined with a resonant voice." The Sunday school at Baguley interested him particularly. "He was accustomed for a time to present a Bible to each child attending the Baguley Sunday school who could read clearly and distinctly therein; and there are several in business in Manchester now who possess a Bible with the inscription, 'Given by W. Milne.'" One feature of his character well bespeaks the man—"He hated debt everywhere, but particularly in connection with religious work." "One of the truest and most genial of men" is how the Report of 1905 truly describes him.

### Altrincham and Bowdon.

As far back as 1803 the Rev. James Turner hired a cottage at Altrincham—near the market-place—from an aged and poor widow of the name of Cox, a member of the Independent Church at Gatley; and, together with "other excellent ministers," held regular services there till they had to be given up "for lack of local sympathy and support." A second venture, made some years later by the Rev. Joseph Whitworth, father of the late Sir Joseph Whitworth, fared no better.<sup>1</sup> Then, in 1839, a little chapel at the foot of the Downs—which had been erected for the followers of the Rev. Mr. Aitkin, a seceder from the Church of England—was purchased by "a Committee appointed by the Union,"<sup>2</sup> and opened on July 4 as an Independent place of worship<sup>3</sup> by Revs. Dr. Raffles of Liverpool, J. Turner of Knutsford, and S. Luke of Chester. A church of ten members chose the Rev. John Earnshaw for its first minister. "He has been recently ordained,"<sup>4</sup> says the Report of April 1840, and "for several months has preached" "on Sabbath mornings and evenings" to a growing congregation. A Sunday school of 80

<sup>1</sup> It is said to have had the assistance of the county Union, but there is no sign of this in the Reports.

<sup>2</sup> Twelfth Report.

<sup>3</sup> Cost of chapel £465, which the necessary alterations raised to £588.

<sup>4</sup> Not *after* April, therefore, according to Mr. Shaw: "Story of the Church at Bowdon Downs," by Rev. Henry Shaw (Urmston), (p. 6).

scholars has been formed, and cottage services, &c., in the poorer parts of the town, as well as a visitation of the town generally, have been taken in hand. In short, a "cause" destined to become one of the strongest in the county has at last taken root. The next Report (1842) speaks of efforts still "crowned with marked success," and notes particularly that "the congregation have already repaid a large portion of the annual grant<sup>1</sup> of the Union, and have liberally contributed to the London Missionary Society." "It will," adds the writer, "gratify those who are the friends of home as well as foreign missions to observe that in this case the efforts of the former have most efficiently aided the latter." Before the Report of 1849 the Union's aid had been dispensed with.

Mr. Earnshaw resigned in March 1844.<sup>2</sup> His successor, Rev. John Flavel Stenner, held the pastorate from 1844 to the spring of 1847. The Rev. John Wilkinson, the next minister, died at the end of ten months (July 18, 1847, to May 2, 1848). In June 1848 a new chapel was opened on the Higher Downs, the old being reserved for a day and Sunday school. Of this new chapel the first minister was Rev. Henry Christopherson of Newcastle-on-Tyne. He settled on March 25, 1849, and resigned on October 20, 1856,<sup>3</sup> "in consequence of the delicate condition of his wife's health." His departure was a great loss to his own church, and no small loss to the Union. A student of Western College, Mr. H. T. Robjohns, B.A., was the next choice of the church. He remained for something less than four years—July 12, 1857, to April 3, 1861.<sup>4</sup> During his time the old chapel, used for school purposes since 1848, but found to be increasingly inconvenient, was abandoned for a new school building. This was opened on January 4, 1861, the whole cost (£2600) being wiped out by April 1862.

Here we may turn to note the subsequent fortunes of the "old chapel." It was left vacant. But in 1862 another congregation of Independents began to meet there, with the Rev. A. Dewar for minister. A year later he was succeeded by Rev. W. B. MacWilliam of Middlewich, secretary of the Union, who himself refers to his removal in the 1864 Report, and describes the church as "small but vigorous, and, despite a rental of £50 per annum for its 'hired home,' self-reliant and self-sustaining."

<sup>1</sup> Amount not stated, but the collection for the Union was (in 1840-41) £25.

<sup>2</sup> Both this date and that of Mr. Stenner's removal are "queried" in the "Monthly Record of the Bowdon Church" for November 1882.

<sup>3</sup> He became minister of New College Chapel, St. John's Wood, London.

<sup>4</sup> He removed to Newcastle-on-Tyne—West Clayton Street; then, after thirteen years, to Fish Street, Hull; then in 1883 to Sydney as agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Mr. MacWilliam resigned in 1867, and his successor, Rev. C. Aylard, held the charge till 1879. For the next six years it stands in the list of churches as "vacant"<sup>1</sup>; but on August 12, 1885, it met and passed the following resolution: "That after prayerful consideration the remaining members of the Altrincham Congregational Church, acting on the advice given by the sub-committee of the Cheshire County Union, do accept the cordial welcome of the pastor and deacons of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church, and seek admission to the fellowship of their branch church at the British School, with the ultimate object that their long-cherished desire of promoting a strong and efficient Independent church in Altrincham be attained."<sup>2</sup>

Reverting to the Downs church, Mr. Robjohns was followed in January 1862 by a man of singular gifts and charm—Rev. A. J. Morris of Holloway. His coming was eagerly desired, and excited bright hopes. But after three Sundays his health broke down, and though nominally pastor for two years, he never preached again. "For several months the pulpit was supplied by various ministers; then in the autumn, when it became clear that Mr. Morris's illness would be a very protracted one, the Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A., was appointed to discharge his duties for three months—an engagement which was prolonged to April of the following year, and then to the end of it." Mr. Morris wished to resign, and wrote a letter of resignation on August 22, 1863. The church, however, induced him to withdraw it, and only when the case became evidently hopeless did his people consent to let him go. His final resignation was accepted on January 13, 1864, and on June 29 the Rev. Henry Griffiths, F.G.S., of Newington Chapel, Liverpool, began a remarkable ten years' ministry.

Significant of prosperity were the facts that ere long the chapel had to be enlarged, and that "the increased demands" of the church seemed to call for an assistant. The latter project fell through,<sup>3</sup> but the former came to pass in 1868, when "transepts with galleries" were added to the building.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Griffiths removed to High Barnet in 1875, though the church tried hard to retain him.<sup>5</sup> He was a man of unusual gifts as a preacher

<sup>1</sup> 1867, C. Aylard. 1879, C. Aylard resigned. 1880-85, vacant.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1886. The sub-committee consisted of Rev. A. Clark, Mr. Joseph Wood, Rev. J. W. Paull (secretary).

<sup>3</sup> In 1871 John Hunter of Spring Hill College preached and was desired for the office, but he had accepted the call to York.

<sup>4</sup> Opened April 12 (Easter Sunday).

<sup>5</sup> The testimonial fund reached £2128—enough to purchase two annuities, "one of £100 for Mr. Griffiths, and another a joint and survivor annuity of £100 for Mr. Griffiths and his wife." He died August 14, 1891, aged nearly eighty years.



and otherwise, and it would seem difficult to replace him. Yet it may truly be said that loss turned to gain when the Rev. A. Mackennal, B.A., of Gallowtree Gate, Leicester, was induced to take up the charge. He accepted the invitation of the church on December 15, 1876, and continued to serve its highest interests, no less than those of the churches generally, with conspicuous ability till he passed to his rest in 1904.

The track of his wise influence in the proceedings of the Union is visible from his first coming into the county. Nearly every Report bears witness to it—especially in the way of developing a higher and wider interest in “public questions,” or in the broader aspects of denominational work.

The Downs Church has always been a missionary church, and its missionary spirit has been “domestic” as well as “foreign.” Thus we read in the Report of 1861 that with regard to Lymm (then just struggling into life), “material aid as well as the help of sympathy and counsel has been specially afforded by the church in Bowdon.” Again, in 1864, we find “friends in Bowdon” responding eagerly to an appeal from the “little church at Gatley,” and beginning to render assistance, chiefly through the North Cheshire Rural Mission (a creation of the Bowdon Church), which was continued for several years.

Other places, such as Heyhead, Mobberley, Broadheath, Partington, Baguley, became associated still more closely with the church; and spheres of regular service for a succession of its most devoted members.

Dr. Mackennal fostered carefully this side of the church life.

He believed in trying to realise, where practicable, what might be called the primitive Episcopal ideal, according to which a strong central community with its minister may take the “oversight” of several smaller communities around it—each relatively independent—and may with these constitute one church.

It was, therefore, by no means a whim, but a change of serious and joyous significance which he announced in the “Manual for 1892,” when he addressed his pastoral letter for the first time “to the members of the Church of the Congregational Order Meeting at Bowdon Downs, the British School, Altrincham, Broadheath, Partington, Heyhead, and Mobberley.”

He was thankful to his friends at Bowdon for enabling him to engage an assistant, mainly because they were at once “lightening” his labours and “making them more extensive,” by making them co-extensive with “all the branches of this one church.”

Mission work, indeed, of the kind thus represented seemed

to him to contain the solution of some of the gravest social difficulties.

"It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance to our peasantry of having a man of God settled among them, not only conducting religious services in the free and simple fashion which they love, but always at their call in sickness and trouble, daily seen among them, and exerting a neighbourly influence in favour of virtue and godliness. And for such men to feel that they have behind them a strong fellowship like that of the Downs Church is to be encouraged in many a season of down-heartedness. No less is it an advantage to the members of the Home Church to have the constant reminder of village needs which our Rural Mission supplies."<sup>1</sup> Hence he never allowed the Rural Mission, or the branches of his one church, to take a secondary place. Yet in his devotion to rural missions he did not let the church overlook the claims of the "great city" at the doors. "The Manchester and Salford Congregational Mission Board, of which Dr. Mackennal was the president, owed its existence very largely to the support of the church at Bowdon." It has supplied the Knot Mill Hall, the Chapel Street Mission, the mission at Heyrod Street with many of their most earnest workers; "and the founder of the Star Hall, Ancoats, with its benign agencies—the late Mr. Frank Crossley—was one of its members, and for seven years one of its deacons, and for a much longer period a teacher in its Sunday school." In short, if the statement have any truth that suburban churches are apt to become selfish, then Bowdon has shown itself a remarkable exception to the rule.

The expanding needs of the church and pressure of outside claims upon the minister revived in 1891 the question of an assistant.

The result was a series of men who did much to sustain his hands, and gained much from his experience. The first to hold the position was a student of Western College, the Rev. J. Kirk Maconachie, now pastor of the Church at Rusholme, from January 1892 to July 1893; the second, a student of the Edinburgh Theological Hall, the Rev. M. F. Peterson, M.A., from September 1, 1893, to April 14, 1895; the third, the Rev. John Hutchison, a student of Lancashire College, from October 1895 to May 1897; the fourth, another student of the Edinburgh Theological Hall, the Rev. W. Moncrieff, M.A., from September 1897 to 1901. Finally, in 1903, came the Rev. John Holden, M.A., of Norwich, not simply as assistant, but as co-pastor. His election to the office of sole pastor in 1904, after Dr.

<sup>1</sup> Manual for 1895.

Mackennal's death, took place in due course and has justified itself abundantly. Bowdon owes much to its "honourable men and women,"—not a few.<sup>1</sup> One of these, Mr. Abraham Haworth, died in 1901—"a man," says the next year's Report, of "unaffected but earnest piety, a true and generous friend of the churches and of every good work, and not less so of humble and obscure worth whenever its needs were made known to him."

### Partington.

The church in this village (about five miles north-west of Altrincham) goes back at least to 1715, when the Rev. William Harding became minister and preached to 100 hearers. Its history has been marked by many fluctuations; and, at one time (in 1815) it seemed on the point of lapsing to the Unitarians—so sharing the fate of a majority of the old Presbyterian foundations in Cheshire and Lancashire. Its greatest measure of prosperity came under the Rev. Charles Lowndes—"a plain but serious" preacher, of evangelical spirit.<sup>2</sup> In his day a church was formed of thirty members (1821), and a minister's house was built, as well as "a Sunday school at the end of the chapel and a new gallery over the school." But under his successor, Mr. Stewart, the congregation fell off, and continued to do so under Mr. Fielding, who came next. Nor did any improvement take place under Rev. C. T. Sevier, of Bowdon, who was pastor from 1843 to 1861. Three years before this latter date some members of the Bowdon Church began to interest themselves, and, for one thing, caused the place to be put upon a new Trust. After Mr. Sevier's retirement the Union entrusted a grant of £20 for the use of Partington to a Bowdon committee.<sup>3</sup> This committee engaged the services of Mr. Peter Bond, formerly an agent of the Manchester City Mission, who (says the Report of 1862) soon raised the attendances "from a little above zero to nearly temperate in the afternoon, and far beyond fever heat in the evening—the numbers respectively being 40 and 135."<sup>4</sup> There was no church, but "sixteen enquirers" held out the promise of one soon—in fact, as soon as Mr. Bond had regained his health! But alas! he did not regain it. For a time the pulpit was "supplied by students from the Cavendish College."<sup>5</sup> There was the utmost reluctance to give up "their missionary." At length,

<sup>1</sup> See Shaw's "Story of the Church," pp. 23-28.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards of Mobberley and Gatley.

<sup>3</sup> Messrs. Armitage, Melland, Rigby, and Waters.

<sup>4</sup> The "capacity" of the chapel is given as for 130.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Parker's institution.





PARTINGTON.



BUCKLOW HILL.



MOULTON.



FRODSHAM.



however, his case proving hopeless and "the place languishing for lack of the services of a regular agent," Mr. Wilkinson, "one of the agents of the North Cheshire Rural Mission" was asked to take charge. He also had good success. Under him a day school grew up, the Sunday school rose from 11 to 25 scholars, the congregations averaged 40 in the morning and from 100 to 120 in the evening; and 10 persons were added to the church at Bowdon,<sup>1</sup> whose minister, Rev. H. Griffiths, preached at Partington once every two months and administered the Lord's Supper to its small contingent.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wilkinson left in 1865: and the next evangelist, Mr. Joseph Whitley, came to a dwindling "cause." His "labours" did not improve things. "The population," he said, "is small and stationary, and there are several other places of worship." By advice of the committee, he "extended his operations" to some of the neighbouring villages—visiting Carrington, Warburton, and the whole of Hollins Green.

Here the story breaks off, so far as the Union is concerned. The place, however, was still served by evangelists until 1885,<sup>3</sup> when the Rev. David Clegg "accepted the pastoral oversight," "in conjunction with that of Cadishead, which is under the Lancashire Union." He resigned in 1889, and hereupon Partington ceased apparently to sustain any direct connection with the Union, while Cadishead is described, year by year till 1899, as connected with Lancashire Union and "vacant." But in 1891 Partington has for evangelist Mr. A. Carter,<sup>4</sup> and is numbered with the mission stations of Bowdon. This has been its position ever since—though it has now a separate church and a regular minister, Rev. A. Barrett, A.T.S., of Lancashire College, who succeeded Mr. Carter in 1899.

*Grants.*—1862-69, £20 annually.

<sup>5</sup> In April 1859 the North Cheshire Book-Hawking Association was formed to distribute religious literature of various kinds among the villages round Bowdon. It was of an unsectarian character, and employed lay agents to visit the homes of the people, read to them the Bible, effect sales of their books, tracts, and periodicals, and on occasion to hold religious services in some house where the people showed a willingness to gather together.

<sup>1</sup> The intended revival of a separate church had not yet come about.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1865.

<sup>3</sup> Report of 1886.

<sup>4</sup> Previously evangelist at Mobberley village; later, minister of Brinksway, Stockport.

<sup>5</sup> For most of what follows, down to "Broadheath" (inclusive), I have to thank the Rev. A. Barrett, of Partington.

This Association was dissolved at the end of 1862, and in the spring of 1863 the North Cheshire Rural Mission was formed to take its place. This mission not only distributed religious books and tracts, but also took under its charge the places of worship in some of the villages in which it carried on its work, making itself responsible for supplying their pulpits with suitable preachers. It was supported chiefly by members of the Bowdon Church and congregation; but it was not until January 1878 that, on the suggestion of Dr. Mackennal, it was taken over as an integral part of that church's work, with the title "Bowdon Downs Congregational Church Rural Mission." At one time it supervised Heyhead, Broadheath, Partington, Mobberley (Pepper St.), Gatley, and the British School, Altrincham. To-day its interests are confined to Heyhead, Partington, and to some extent Mobberley.

### Heyhead.

A Sunday evening cottage meeting was begun in this village on June 13, 1861, by one of the agents of the Book-Hawking Association (Mr. Smith), at the request of the inhabitants of the district. This was held fortnightly, and was backed up by a weekly Bible Class. These efforts were so successful that the people determined to build a chapel, and with substantial help from many supporters of the Association a place of worship, to hold 250 and costing £315, was opened in November 1862 by the Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A., the Rev. S. Hooper of Heaton Mersey, and the Rev. W. Urwick, M.A., of Hatherlow, the foundation stone having been laid in the preceding spring by Sir James Watts. This became one of the stations of the Rural Mission Committee, which has always had an agent on the spot to carry on the work. In 1905 it was found needful to build a school, which was opened free of debt.

### Mobberley (Pepper St.).

In the Report for 1863 of the Bowdon Congregational Church—the first it published—it is stated that "services have been carried on at Mobberley for about 2½ years by the teachers of the Sunday school." In this year it was incorporated in the North Cheshire Rural Mission, whose agents, in addition to some of the teachers, regularly held services in a small cottage hired for the purpose. This cottage gave place to a school chapel built by Bowdon<sup>1</sup> in 1868. An evangelist works this place in conjunction with Knolls Green, which is supervised by the County Union.

<sup>1</sup> See Report, 1868.

Pepper Street has never had any assistance from the Union, but has always been a mission sustained financially by the Bowdon Church. In 1896, for example, it is said: "Beyond personal and money help to this station, the Bowdon Church contributes £40 a year towards the salary of Mr. King." Its help now is purely financial, the personal help coming from Ashley Road (*q.v.*).

### Broadheath.

Services were first begun here in 1859 by Mr. John Rigby of Altrincham, a member of the Bowdon Congregational Church. There were at that time mission boats on the Bridgewater canals, and it was in one of these mission boats, moored nearly opposite the present school, that the Congregational Church at Broadheath started. The services were soon transferred to land, were continued in an iron foundry, and supplemented by a Bible Class conducted in a cottage by Mr. Rigby. The work came under the supervision of the Rural Mission, and a chapel holding 200 was opened in 1864, and put in charge of an evangelist. In 1886 the commodious Rigby Memorial Schools were put up in commemoration of the founder of the work at Broadheath. In 1898 the prospects were so promising that the Rural Mission Committee resigned their oversight into the hands of a committee appointed by the Bowdon Church and the Broadheath members jointly. Their first step was to secure a large plot of land joining their old premises on which to erect a large and spacious church. A pastor was secured in April 1900 from Cheshunt College (Rev. W. D. Thomas), and under his leadership the new church was built and opened for public worship September 29, 1903, when the Rev. Principal Adeney of Lancashire College preached.

#### LIST OF EVANGELISTS, MINISTERS, &C.

**Heyhead.**—Mr. Smith, Mr. Wm. Fielden, Mr. Jones of Brecon College, Mr. Wm. Renshaw, Mr. A. Humphries.

**Mobberley.**—Mr. Meek, Mr. A. Carter, Mr. E. Dawson King, Mr. Wm. Dawson.

**Broadheath.**—Mr. Wm. Fielden (1864-1874), Mr. Hughes (1874-1881); Mr. S. Nicholls (1881-1899), Rev. W. D. Thomas (1900- —).

### Bucklow Hill.

About the year 1820, Mr. Peter Hope, of Vine House, Bucklow Hill, farmer and mason, was clerk of the Parish Church at Rostherne. His daughters, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Catherine,

kept a ladies' boarding-school which was well known both in Lancashire and Cheshire.

The Vicar of Rostherne at that time was one of the high and dry kind; and Hannah and Elizabeth Hope felt sorely the need of evangelical services, especially for the poor. They appear to have been largely influenced by the writings of Ann and Jane Taylor. Although only just over twenty years of age, they began to hold cottage services in the surrounding hamlets. These meetings becoming overcrowded, they sought a larger room and found one in a stable (now a cowshed) attached to Vine House, which they rented and fitted up with forms in June 1826. Supplies were obtained from Manchester and other places through the good offices of the Rev. James Turner, who occasionally took services himself. In 1832 a small company was formed into a Christian church, and a memorandum of the event, written by one of the persons then present, is extant, as follows:—"Monday evening, May 14, 1832. Seven of us united in church fellowship. Rev. John Adamson prayed, and explained the nature of a Christian church and the character of church members from Heb. iii. 1. Mr. Adamson then read our names, and desired us, if we had given ourselves to Christ, and now to each other by the will of God, to signify it by holding up the right hand." Mr. John Foden and Mr. Mark Brickhill were appointed deacons. "No notice of Bucklow Hill," writes Mr. Jenkins,<sup>1</sup> "can be complete without reference to John Foden, the deacon. He too had been brought up a churchman by a pious mother. When he was a teamsman in the service of Squire Brooke of Mere, he with others was bidden one Saturday evening in harvest time to come and work on the Sunday, under pain of dismissal. That evening John consulted the vicar, asking him if it were right to work on Sunday. "Certainly not," replied the vicar. John then told the vicar what the squire had said. "If the squire says you must work that alters the case, and of course you must go," said the vicar. This did not satisfy the young man, so he went to Miss Hannah, who simply asked, "What does the Bible say? Are we to obey God or the squire?" That settled the matter for John, who went to the chapel next day for the first time and never went to the parish church again." One is glad to find that the squire did not dismiss him, but that "From being teamsman he became farmer on the home farm, and afterwards agent for the estate, winning the greatest esteem of both landlord and tenantry. His influence and example told greatly for the work at Bucklow Hill, where his memory is still

<sup>1</sup> Who has kindly communicated these particulars of the earliest days.

cherished with that of the Misses Hope.<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Dean of Over-Tabley is the son-in-law of Mr. Foden and "nobly fills" the place left vacant by the death of the latter in 1880.

Our earliest glimpse of Bucklow Hill through the "Reports" is in a letter from the Rev. Job Wilson to the Union, dated Northwich, May 23, 1834, describing his two recent visits. Services, he says, are held in a "cottage," "which the people themselves have fitted up with pulpit and benches and other apparatus, to make it as convenient as possible"—at a yearly rent of £5. Here for the past eight years they have had preaching every Lord's Day, and have carried on a Sunday school which numbers "between forty and sixty children."<sup>2</sup> On "sixteen Sabbaths in the year stated ministers" are engaged to preach and are paid; on "the other Sabbaths" friends, principally from Manchester, come for their travelling expenses. There is a church of nine or ten members—so far self-sustaining; but there is need for a chapel and no means to pay for it. Would that "every village in the county," adds Mr. Wilson, "had the same means, with equally promising prospects of success!" The chapel was built in 1835, and the Union did what it could to help. For a time supplies were still obtained from Manchester, &c.; but after Mr. Earnshaw's settlement at Altrincham in 1839, they ceased to be needed, since he agreed to preach regularly on "the Lord's Day afternoon," and also to lecture on Thursday evenings. This continued until Mr. Earnshaw's departure from Altrincham in 1844 again threw the place back on supplies—"good and acceptable"; and the record for the next fifteen years is uniformly the same—congregations good, Sunday school small (owing to adverse local influences) but efficient, and a general state of peace and goodwill. One circumstance merits emphatic notice, viz., that, while the yearly grant from 1848 (or earlier) was £10, the little flock returned more than half of this by its annual collections—part of which (from 1850) was made up of sums contributed by a Juvenile Missionary Society. This of itself is an excellent testimonial. Then in 1859 the people took the resolution to go forward unaided—the church at the time having 19 members; the Sunday school 26 scholars; and the congregations being 101 in the morning, 95 in the afternoon.

The Union might well express its "great satisfaction," and commend such an example of "high and honourable Christian

<sup>1</sup> Miss Elizabeth Hope became the wife of the Rev. — Leigh, of Oldham, and the supervision of the work rested on Miss Hannah for about forty years.

<sup>2</sup> Another room, says the letter, is hired for the school at 52s. a year.



reliance" to the imitation of other aided churches in the county. After a further four years of supplies the church felt strong enough to support a minister, and in 1863 the Rev. J. Sidebottom took charge. He remained three years, and was succeeded in 1867 by Rev. Mark Hardaker, who held the pastorate till 1882, when he retired "on account of growing and various infirmities." The church was now too weak to maintain a minister of itself, and so again had recourse to the Union, which readily promised £40 a year, on the undertaking that the "area of operations should include Over-Tabley."<sup>1</sup> Early in 1883 a pastor was found in Rev. T. Jenkins, late a missionary in the West Indies, who held office for twenty-one years, until his retirement, after much sickness, to Colwyn Bay in 1904. At this date the church numbered 37, and the Sunday school 59; in 1883 the church members were 34 and the scholars 53—showing but a slight numerical advance. But the work done throughout these quiet years appears, even from the "Reports," to have been "good and faithful."

"A sturdy little church, in robust health . . . chapel repaired and otherwise improved and the entire debt discharged"—so the Report of 1885.

"More than holding its own in a district where the prevailing influences are adverse to Nonconformity"—so that of 1887.

"The debt of £300, which remained a year ago on the almost enforced purchase of a manse, has been cleared off . . . last summer a good deal of open-air preaching was done in the neighbourhood by various ministers with good results . . . a class for the instruction of the young people in Congregational principles has been established"—so that of 1890.

"This church is the centre of much of the genuine spiritual life of the neighbourhood"—so the Report of 1892.

"A better state of things"—despite many discouragements and fears—than for years past. . . . "Every branch of church activity is healthily working" . . . "the vicar of Rostherne has sent a donation of £2 for the work at Bucklow Hill, with the expressed wish that he could make it more"—so that of 1896.

Another sort of vicar had come on the scene before 1899 who threatened to sweep dissent out of the parish. But in the teeth of clerical opposition, "heavy losses," and the minister's serious breakdown of health, the situation is reported as encouraging and the outlook bright.

Much of this "good success" must be ascribed to the fact

<sup>1</sup> Already, for some years, helped to the extent of £10 annually.

that the little church has never been without the blessing of a few faithful men and women who have had the glory of God at heart—conspicuous among whom has been Mr. Dean of Tabley Hall. The present minister is Rev. W. Gill, who settled from Nottingham Institute in 1905, and has already proved himself to be a man of the right stamp for such a people.

*Grants.*—1834-58, £10 annually (but the amount not specified before 1849). 1859, £5. 1883-96, £40 (on condition that Over-Tabley be worked). 1897, £35. 1898-1903, £40. 1904, £35. 1905, £30, with a minister. 1906, £30.

### Ashley Road, Hale.

This thriving church is an embodiment of the aggressive missionary spirit of the church at Bowdon Downs. A meeting of Bowdon gentlemen, held at the house of Mr. J. Herbert Harrison on May 31, 1897, gave the start. Its immediate outcome was the securing of a plot of land "near where the Ashley Road crosses the Park Road." This plot of 4220 square yards offered ample space for the contemplated school chapel, and for "a main building in front" when required. A year later, on Saturday, May 21—the day after a memorable meeting held in Bowdon Downs to celebrate the completion of his fortieth year of ministerial service—Dr. Mackennal laid the foundation stone of the school chapel, and on May 4, 1899 it was dedicated for use. "Our first service"—to quote Dr. Mackennal, who presided—"was a prayer meeting, in which representatives of the Wesleyan Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, and the Primitive Methodist Churches of the district heartily joined. The first sermon was preached in the evening by the chairman of the Congregational Union, the Rev. H. Arnold Thomas. On June 1 a church of Christ was constituted, twenty-four members being dismissed from our own fellowship to form, with six members from other churches, the new Christian community."<sup>1</sup>

A year before, in anticipating this step, Dr. Mackennal said: "Our roll will be shortened and there will be gaps in our Assembly, but we must not for a moment regret that. We shall send our friends to begin a new and promising work for God; and our affection and confidence should be increased by the remembrance of the fuller sphere which we have helped to make for their service." There speaks the spirit—the spirit of Christ—which ever "seeks first the kingdom of God."

The total cost of the undertaking is given as £4520, 1s. 11d.,

<sup>1</sup> Bowdon Manual for 1900.

“against which, at the time of opening, £3593, 18s. 7d. had been promised, including £500 from the Lancashire and Cheshire Congregational Chapel Building Society.”

On June 7 a Committee of Management was elected, consisting of nine members (inclusive of secretary, treasurer and assistant secretary). This merely transitional expedient came to an end in March 1900, and was replaced by a Diaconate. Before the year closed the new church had also found its first minister in the Rev. A. T. S. James, B.A., B.Sc., a student of Lancashire College, who had settled at Mold Green, Huddersfield, in 1897. He accepted its “cordial invitation” on October 28, and began his work on the first Sunday of 1900.

The debt of £914 upon the church at its opening was all cleared off by the end of 1900—a fine evidence of spiritual vigour. No wonder there was a meeting (in November) to celebrate the event, a meeting “at which Dr. Mackennal and many friends from the Bowdon Downs Church were present.” In addition to this “special effort” the congregation raised close upon £500 for “current expenses” during the first eighteen months, besides £251 by collections for various objects. It is seldom that such a record is met with in so young a church. Perhaps the most noteworthy and hopeful fact appears in what was done for the London Missionary Society—£69 in 1899 and £100, 14s. 4d. in 1900. Our Cheshire Union had to be content with £2, 16s. 7d. in 1900. But each year since has brought an increase, until in 1906 the contribution amounts to £15, 7s. 6d. May the same rate of advance be maintained!

Mr. James resigned in 1903, and in 1904 was succeeded by Rev. T. Wilkinson, from Taunton. The church has now a membership of 104, and a Sunday school (or Children’s Service) of 142. It has endeavoured, moreover, to keep alive a sense of “responsibility for mission work outside” itself. It has, for example, assumed “the oversight and practical working” of Pepper Street, Mobberley, during the last three years. Here, while “Mr. Dawson takes the Sunday services or attends to them,” Mr. J. L. Tatterson, from the Hale Church, is superintendent of the Sunday school, and there is “a rota of teachers who go out with him.” The management of Pepper Street is under a joint-committee, to which Ashley Road supplies six members—besides Mr. Wilkinson—the Bowdon Church supplying two, and Pepper Street itself another in addition to Mr. Dawson.

### Knutsford.

Knutsford figures prominently in the early years of Cheshire Nonconformity. It was here that, on October 20, 1653, the ministers met and "agreed upon a voluntary association of themselves and their ministers, if it could be done, for mutuall advice and strengthening one another."<sup>1</sup> It was here, too, that the classis of Cheshire ministers, which originated at Macclesfield in March 1690, held most of its meetings. The old Presbyterian chapel, now Unitarian, may well be regarded as the rallying-point of Nonconformity for a long period. But Independency did not begin to organise itself till 1770. From about that date its few adherents met together and read sermons on the Sabbath day in private houses, till at length, mainly by the efforts of Captain Scott, a small chapel was erected in 1803. The services were conducted, among others, by students from Rev. W. Roby's academy at Manchester, and the first of these students to visit the place was the one on whom the "little flock" set their hearts.<sup>2</sup> This was James Turner, who settled there in 1808, and there remained till the day of his death, Friday, May 22, 1863.<sup>3</sup>

For 1809, the first year after his settlement, Knutsford contributed £15, 6s. 9½d. to the Union funds—a fact significant of his immediate interest in its work. His personal subscription of £1, 1s. was, so far as one can trace, never once withheld during the following years of his ministry. He was secretary for more than twenty years, from 1820 onwards. And the Reports he wrote, particularly his Jubilee Sketch of the Union's history, illustrate an enthusiasm which burnt steadily through the darkest days. His certainly is a name which cannot be allowed to die.

In the course of 1863 the church found a successor to Mr. Turner in the Rev. R. Alliott, B.A. His pastorate, however, was a short one, ending in 1867.<sup>4</sup> The Rev. W. W. Harry, who settled in 1868, proved himself an "able and devoted pastor," and died

<sup>1</sup> Martindale's Diary, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> In 1806 Mr. Hulme is described (by Mr. Evans) as minister of Knutsford. This he never was; but a Mr. Thomas Hulme is remembered traditionally as an active lay-supporter of the church. He bequeathed to it a legacy of £400, and was nephew of Mr. Thomas Toft, who, in 1813, left a sum of money to the church, the interest of which is still received. (Mr. W. Carey Walters has kindly supplied this information.)

<sup>3</sup> Born at Stroud, near Oldham, in March 1782; bookseller's apprentice in Manchester; student under Mr. Roby, and then at Rotherham College; minister at Knutsford for fifty-five years—such is the simple framework of his life.

<sup>4</sup> He was a scholar, and is best remembered in connection with his work as headmaster of Bishop Stortford School.



at his post in the beginning of 1876. But his charge was a burden from the first. For the congregation was no longer what it had been, while the cost of a new church (truly described as one of the finest in the county), opened in 1866, had entailed a heavy debt. Knutsford, consequently, was driven to appear among "the recipients of help" from the Union in 1869. The grant was for £50, on the understanding that a portion of it went to the maintenance of services at Mobberley (Knolls Green).

This place deserves more than a passing notice. The chapel here was erected in 1783. Originally intended for the Wesleyan Methodists, and used by them or by the Methodist New Connexionists for several years, it had become practically deserted when the Independents took it up in 1803. From that date Mr. Roby's students conducted Sunday services regularly. When Mr. Turner came to Knutsford he made himself responsible for the place—preaching there once on the Sabbath, or providing a supply. Apparently even before his settlement the people attending bought the chapel, and "vested it in Trust for the Independents." A Sunday school was established in addition to the adult services, and both were alike successful. Mr Turner had it in his constant care, and made it (after 1841) a frequent contributor to the Union, its collection sometimes almost equalling that of Knutsford.<sup>1</sup> After his death it seems to have undergone some decline, though Mr. Alliott continued the oversight. In 1866 a moiety of the £50 received from the Executive for special efforts was marked off by the District Committee to assist in supporting an evangelist at Knolls Green (together with Mobberley Brook Lane).<sup>2</sup> An evangelist—Mr. John Fell—was appointed, and a church formed (of 14 members); and though still regarded as under the superintendence of Knutsford, it is treated for some years as practically separate. Then, in 1871, it resumed "its more intimate connection with Knutsford." The pastor of Knutsford was to preach there on each Sunday, and a grant of £10 was given towards the expense of Sunday and week-night services. This closer connection was maintained till 1894, when an arrangement took place "by which the two churches going by the name of Mobberley—that, viz., at Knolls Green and that at Pepper Street," were to be "worked together under one minister or evangelist." The right man was found in Mr. Dawson King. "The congregation at Knolls

<sup>1</sup> 1842, Knutsford, £1, 16s. 8d.; Mobberley, £1, 11s. 1846, Knutsford, £2, 5s. 11d.; Mobberley, £1, 15s. 3d. 1849, Knutsford, £1, 16s. 8d.; Mobberley, £1, 4s. 8d. 1861, Knutsford, £2, 2s. 3½d.; Mobberley, £1, 13s. 6d.

<sup>2</sup> Minute Book, January 22.



Green," says the Report of 1895, "is nearly threefold what it was a year ago, and vigour, which was considerably depressed, has been imparted to all departments." Mr. King held "the joint pastorate" of Knolls Green and Pepper Street—assisted latterly by "the interest and frequent services of our friend Mr. Joseph Wood"—till his removal to Nottingham in the autumn of 1897 or 1899. His place was taken in 1900 by Mr. Dawson, of Stockport, at the invitation of the Executive and representatives from Bowdon Church, and satisfactory progress has been reported each year since. One act of grateful recognition should be mentioned. "Two cottages adjoining the chapel were purchased at the beginning of 1902," and, under the hand of Mr. Falkner Armitage, became "a most commodious and beautiful schoolroom, which was "happily named 'The Joseph Wood Memorial School.'"

Meanwhile, after fifteen months' vacancy following the death of Mr. Harry, Knutsford had obtained a pastor in the Rev. W. J. Meek, of Nottingham Institute. He began his work in the beginning of 1877, and removed to East Grinstead in 1885—the Reports during his ministry being, on the whole, uniformly good. The Rev. Alfred Buckley, late of Market Drayton, succeeded him in the same year, and did what he could, amid confessedly great difficulties, till his resignation in 1892.<sup>1</sup> A special committee of the Executive, co-operating with friends on the spot, then took up the burden; and in July 1893 "placed Rev. Henry Lockett, formerly of Nottingham, in the pastorate for a period of two or three years, explaining to him the special and peculiar conditions under which he was appointed to the office, with its duties." A period of ebb and flow issued in the retirement of Mr. Lockett in June 1898. Great concern was felt at this time about the fortunes of the place. "If it is to be rescued from disaster," says the Report, "it will need not only liberal financial support from the Union, but also such personal interest and sympathy from the pastors and individual members of the churches in the neighbourhood as may win the attachment of Congregationalists living in Knutsford, who hitherto have held aloof." Much relief was experienced when the Rev. F. Carter, late of Northwich and secretary of the Union, consented to take the oversight. The invitation given to him by the local committee and all those in regular attendance was heartily seconded by the special committee of the Executive, and Mr.

<sup>1</sup> In the 1892 Report the renovating, &c., of the Mobberley Chapel at a cost of £200—all paid except £20—is ascribed to the "energy of Mr. Buckley." He is credited also, in the 1890 Report, with inspiring the "hard and successful" efforts "to build a manse" as one way "of becoming more self-supporting."

Carter began work on July 30, 1899. The first year's Report—written by Dr. Mackennal—spoke of "the influence of a faithful ministry, quietly and sedulously operative in many directions," as already making itself manifestly felt. But the Report of 1902 announced very regretfully that Mr. Carter had "found it advisable, out of consideration for his health, to resign the charge"; and the special committee, while expressing gratitude to Mr. Carter for his devoted efforts, "cannot put difficulties in the way of his having the rest he seeks." After 1902 the special committee devolved its duties upon a committee appointed by the district "acting in conjunction with a local committee." For the next two years or more the services mainly of students were engaged. Finally, in July 1904 the Rev. S. R. Laundy, from St. Heliers, became the minister, and the latest Reports (1906) are said to be "very cheering." The premises, both school and chapel, have been decorated and renovated; the congregations and the weekly offerings have largely increased; the Sunday school, though small, is healthy, and a Young People's Union has well-attended meetings. Better still, several earnest workers—notably Rev. W. Carey Walters—have thrown in their lot with the place. Best of all, Mr. Laundy has won for himself a strong place in the affection and esteem of the people. Altogether, it seems clear "that the long night of its prostration has passed away, and that now the church is about to take its fitting place among the churches of the county."

*Grants.*—1867, Knolls Green, £25. 1868, Knolls Green and Knutsford, £50. 1869, Knutsford, £50 (part intended for Knolls Green). 1870, Knutsford, £40; Knolls Green and Mobberley Mills, £25.<sup>1</sup> 1871-76, Knutsford, £40<sup>2</sup>; Knolls Green, £10. 1877-78, Knutsford and Mobberley, £60 (the stipend to be £130 clear). 1879, Knutsford, £35 or £40; Mobberley, £10. 1880, Knutsford and Mobberley, £50. 1881-83, Knutsford and Mobberley, £45, "to be reduced next year" was the threat in 1883, but not carried out. 1884-89, Knutsford and Mobberley, £45. 1890-91, Knutsford and Mobberley, £35. 1892, Mobberley, £10; Knutsford—"unwise to renew the grant until radical reforms are carried out." 1893, Knutsford and Mobberley, £60. 1894-95, Knutsford, £90, in hands of a special committee. 1896, Knutsford, £60, in hands of a special committee; Mobberley, £40. 1897, Knutsford, £50; Mobberley, £40. 1898-1906, Knutsford, £40, in hands of sub-committee or executive or district committee; Mobberley, £40.

<sup>1</sup> Mobberley Mills is in Mobberley village, about a mile from Knolls Green, and at this time one of the partners in the mill (a crape mill) was interested in religious work among his work-people.

<sup>2</sup> The Rural Mission at Bowdon had "for a year or more" supplemented these grants towards the support of an evangelist, but this year it withdrew its contribution and "dismissed the evangelist" (John Fell).

## Lymm.

In view of the possibilities of this growing village, a sub-committee of the Union was appointed in 1858 to take the first steps towards the establishment of a Congregational church. A room (formerly used as a Literary Institute) was obtained, and adapted for public worship.<sup>1</sup> Opened as a preaching-place on August 25, 1858, by Professor Newth of Lancashire College, services were held every Sunday; at first in the morning and afternoon, then in the morning and evening, and also on a week-night—the latter being conducted by the Rev. E. Morris (of Sale) and the Rev. H. T. Robjohns (of Bowdon). A morning congregation averaging 70 and an evening one averaging 155 soon rewarded the venture, as did also a Sunday school of nearly 40, originated and sustained mainly by the persevering zeal of Jonathan Lees, Esq., of Manchester.<sup>2</sup> Generous contributions from Bowdon and Sale, added to the Union's grant of £30, and another from Lady Hewley's Charity, met all expenses. Such was the encouraging first year's Report.

The next concern of the Committee was to obtain a suitable minister, in the belief that "his settlement would conduce greatly to the prosperity of the place." For a time its efforts in this direction failed, but in 1862 the Rev. R. A. Bertram became the first pastor. Congregations and school at once increased; and a new chapel was made possible by the gift of £500 from the Trustees of Parkgate Chapel and by the sum of £400 promised in subscriptions. On May 21, 1863, the chapel was opened,<sup>3</sup> with results so satisfactory that it could be said in the April following that "the material and moral and spiritual elements are now united as they have never been before." At this time (1874) the minister was the Rev. Joseph Kightley, and the church (formed a few months earlier) numbered 27 members. The next year (1875) a loss of between 30 and 40 persons is reported, due to removals; while the pressure of "a heavy ground rent" makes it impossible to ask for a reduced grant. By April 1866 the debt upon the chapel has been "paid by a few members of the Building Committee"; but things are otherwise stationary, though the hope is cherished that at "no distant period" an

<sup>1</sup> G. C. Dewhirst, Esq., let it for a rent—which he returned as a subscription.

<sup>2</sup> *Father* of the well-known Chinese missionary. His "unwearied efforts" are a subject of frequent and grateful remark. He died at Manchester in September 1873.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown preached in the morning and Professor Newth in the evening. The cost of the building is given as £2500.

influx of "gentlemen engaged in business in the towns" may lead up to independence of the Union. Stationary and pastorless is the Report for 1867, Mr. Kightley having resigned.

His successor was the Rev. E. G. Cecil, and soon after his settlement (1868) the church announced itself now able to meet its own "various expenses." The congregation numbered 120; the Sunday school 130; the church membership 27; and if these figures show that the numerical strength of the place was much the same, its *financial* growth is evidenced by the fact that this year it contributed to the Union, in collections and subscriptions, the handsome sum of £40.<sup>1</sup> Before April 1872 Mr. Cecil resigned, and in December 1872 his place was taken by the Rev. Theophilus W. Pinn, M.A., of Spring Hill College. In 1878 he removed to Stockport, and was succeeded in 1879 by the Rev. James Bedell, late of Oldham Road, Manchester. Mr. Bedell held the pastorate till 1884, when failing health compelled him reluctantly to relinquish it. Next came the Rev. J. H. Ouston, who died in 1888.

After an interval of two years the Rev. Charles Clay, B.A., began a ministry which lasted till 1895. Frequent removals from the neighbourhood—sometimes of whole families—had rendered Mr. Clay's work increasingly difficult; and the loss by removal of Mr. R. Dutton, jun., added to that chronic source of weakness, reduced the church at length to the necessity of applying again to the Union for assistance. Consequently we find it once more among the aided churches in 1899—£40 being the grant towards the stipend of its new minister, Rev. C. E. Watson, of Lancashire College, who took charge four years after Mr. Clay's departure. "A return of prosperity" made £20 sufficient in the following year. But the inherent difficulties of the situation persisted—removals, the influence of the Episcopal Church, a heavy chief rent—and in 1901 the grant had to be raised to £30. What removals meant in the way of loss is illustrated by a statement in the Report of 1902, that "no less than 80 members of the church and congregation have either left the neighbourhood or have died" during the three years' pastorate of Mr. Watson. The brightest side of the picture was presented by the work of the church for its young people.<sup>2</sup> Financially, moreover, relief was gained by a bazaar, which realised £300, mainly for outlay on the "fabric" and a fund to extinguish the chief rent. But 1903 was calamitous, inas-

<sup>1</sup> Collection, £13, 19s.; B. Whitworth, £25; Mr. Sheldon, £1, 1s.

<sup>2</sup> Sunday school increasing; Band of Hope=210; "all the officers of the church are workers among the young" (Report of 1902).



much as Mr. Watson resigned, and one of the most active deacons, who was also treasurer of the church, left the neighbourhood. Since then the church has gone on without a pastor, and the latest Report is not discouraging. There is said to be no falling off in the congregation or Sunday school. There is a successful class for young men, a flourishing Band of Hope, and a Girls' Social Club; and, though the chronic leakage by removals has lessened the regular income, the church account has been almost balanced by special efforts; while a second bazaar has produced enough to pay for the repair and decoration of the chapel. It is rather a depressing issue of so auspicious an enterprise. But the end is not yet. God still has for Lymm a future and a hope, if the friends there do but continue to wait upon Him in prayerful and faithful service.<sup>1</sup>

*Grants.*—1859, £30. 1860–61, £50. 1862–67, £70. 1868, £30, or £50 with minister. 1899, £40. 1900, £20. 1901–3, £30. 1904, £30 with minister, £15 without. 1905–6, £40 with minister, if he be guaranteed £100 stipend.

### Northwich.

Adam Martindale's invitation to "Northwych" (among other places), "a little before and after" his "departure from Gorton" (in 1647), indicates that the place had even then at least a congregation of Puritan tendency (probably not distinct from the congregation of the parish church). Then the existence, in 1700, of a separate Nonconformist congregation, meeting somewhere, is implied in the fact that on October the 9th of that year Mr. Gamaliel Jones of Chadkirk was appointed by the Cheshire classis to preach the Reformation Lecture at Northwich. But the first minister appears to have been a Mr. John Partington, whom the classis "examined, approved, and allowed to preach *as a candidate* on August 9, 1720." At this date, therefore, he was not yet minister, nor is there any proof that he had "settled" before May 2, 1721—when "some persons from Northwich" applied to the "classis" for "assistance towards the building of a meeting-house there." His settlement, however, before April 30, 1722, is vouched for by a "request of the congregation at Northwych"—then received—"for the ordination of Mr. Partington," which event came off on September the 4th following. We learn from the Evans MS.<sup>2</sup> (which covers

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written the church has obtained a pastor in the Rev. A. Barrett, of Partington.

<sup>2</sup> This safe authority speaks of the church as "set up" in 1721.



the years 1717-29) that he removed to Coventry in 1724, and was succeeded in the same year by Mr. John Turner.

Mr. Turner came from Rivington in Lancashire, and was probably still pastor in 1755. In 1759 he is gone, and "the meeting at Northwych is broken up." In 1762 the chapel was taken possession of by Methodists—an act which roused the trustees to threaten legal proceedings. By a compromise the Methodists were permitted to lease the chapel for "eleven years, at an annual rental of £6"—upon certain conditions. Hereupon the Presbyterian minister of Allostock (four miles away) claimed the use of it, another vexatious dispute arose, and the building in the end was again closed.

In the beginning of 1766 the few surviving adherents found a minister in the Rev. J. Green, who held on till 1784. Then came a Mr. Davies, whose brief stay of "little more than a year" is accounted for by his doubtful character. He was followed in 1786 by a Mr. Jarvis, who left in 1794 for Chorley in Lancashire.

Such was the church to which, in June 1795, Captain Scott was the means of bringing Mr. Job Wilson.<sup>1</sup> The undertaking demanded a faith which can remove mountains, but Mr. Wilson had that faith. For forty-three years he pursued his ministry, and gradually levelled the mountains to a plain. He found but the poor, lifeless remnant of a people, but built up a vigorous community. He came to a chapel "small and inconvenient," but at the end of eleven years could point to a new building, "made to seat some 300 persons," paid for by the fruit of his own unwearied efforts.<sup>2</sup> Twelve years passed before his people could raise £20 a year "for everything"; but he lived to record that in one year they had contributed "£10 for books for the school, £12 for lighting and cleansing the chapel and the school, and £52 for the County Union and Missionary Society," besides giving to his own support. At his coming the prejudice against him, as minister of so disreputable a place, was so great that "few persons above the rank of pauper would deign to meet him: they crossed to the other side"; but at his funeral the shops throughout the town were closed, and the resident clergy, no less than the tradesmen and Nonconformist ministers, followed his body to the grave. So potent is the spell of patient Christian service sustained and inspired by the virtue of a genuine Christian character!

He died on the very day, in June 1838, when Queen Victoria was crowned. His friends fitly spoke of *his* coronation.

<sup>1</sup> Ordained at Northwich in October 1797.

<sup>2</sup> Opened September 25, 1806.

In the course of 1839 the Rev. William Lamb became minister. He is said to have added "many persons" to the forty-two who composed the church at the date of Mr. Wilson's decease. Probably he reaped what Mr. Wilson had sown. His removal to Wakefield in 1842 was followed by the settlement of the Rev. John Harrison, who stayed some five years and then "accepted charge of the infant cause at Isleworth, Middlesex, and commenced his labours on 24th December 1848."<sup>1</sup>

From 1849 to the end of 1860 the Rev. D. G. Watt, M.A., held the pastorate, serving also as a much-esteemed secretary of the Union for seven years (1854-61).<sup>2</sup> In his time a new chapel, costing upwards of £2000, was built "at the junction of Winnington Street and Chester Road." The foundation-stone was laid in October 1852, and the opening services took place on June 8, 1853.<sup>3</sup> He removed in 1860 to Dickson Green, near Farnworth. The Rev. James Johns, B.A., came next, and was pastor from June 1861 to 1879, when he went to Totnes, Devonshire. "He was Chairman of the Union in 1871, and secretary of the Bowdon District for a great number of years" (1868-79).<sup>4</sup>

Another District Secretary, who has also been General Secretary since 1899, and was Chairman in 1901—viz., the Rev. Frederick Carter—succeeded Mr. Johns, and worked in the spirit of Job Wilson for nearly twenty years (1880-99). Much was done under Mr. Carter—the best out of sight, but not a little of visible note. Thus, in June 1881, the present handsome chapel, built on land given by Lord Tollemache, was opened, and twelve years later fine new school-buildings were added to the property of the church. The cost of the former was £4000 and of the latter £1600 or £1700—all cleared off before Mr. Carter's retirement. This surely is a good record.

For five years (1899-1904) the pastorate was held by the Rev. J. T. Miles, M.A., of Mansfield College, now at Wrexham; and the present minister, the Rev. F. W. R. Dorling of Castle Street, Reading, settled in 1905. That year brought also a very serious loss to the church by the death of Mr. Algernon Fletcher, one of a family long and honourably associated with Northwich. He and his father filled the office of church treasurer for (nearly) forty years. He was church secretary for three years, deacon for eighteen years, organist for twenty years, Sunday-school teacher for thirty years, and for some years superintendent. Nor did he

<sup>1</sup> *Evangelical Magazine* for 1849, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Macwilliam was not formally appointed till April 1861.

<sup>3</sup> It seated 320.

<sup>4</sup> Report for 1880.

confine his services to the church and school, nor even to the town. He was active for good in other directions, and particularly in regard to the County Union—a fact recognised by his election to the chair in 1895. The death of such a man in what seemed the prime of his powers could not but call forth a regret proportionate to the virtues of his life.

*Note on the Sunday School.*—After 1853 the church carried on a Sunday school in the old schoolroom near Crown Street—a property still belonging to the church, though long since let and used for some other purpose. It also carried on a second school in the upper part of the town—Witton Street (at first in a building rented, then after 1874 in its own school-room). This went on till the erection of the new school buildings in 1903.

### Moulton, Marston, Witton, and Davenham.

The mission at Moulton was an outgrowth from the church at Northwich, and Davenham from Moulton. These two villages are distant respectively two and three miles south from Northwich. In 1833 Mr. Darlington, a member of the Northwich congregation, but a resident in the neighbourhood of Moulton, gave a plot of land in the village on which to build a chapel. He liberally supported the work carried on there, as did also his descendant Miss Darlington, till her death a few years ago. At first and for a time the services at Moulton were conducted by laymen, but in 1839 the Rev. W. Moore became minister, and was succeeded in 1847 by the Rev. E. Ross. He in turn was succeeded at the end of four years by the Rev. C. H. Parrett, who soon after his settlement began services in the neighbouring village of Davenham, where a chapel was built and opened in 1853.<sup>1</sup> These services were carried on for several years by Mr. Parrett in conjunction with Moulton. But the results at Davenham were disappointing, and eventually (about 1870) the chapel was let, at a nominal rental, to the Primitive Methodists and afterwards purchased by them. Mr. Parrett resigned some time before 1866, and in June of that year his place was taken by Mr. Jenkins, described as an evangelist—appointed by the Bowdon District Committee.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Payne followed him in June 1869 and

<sup>1</sup> Before 1833 Mr. Marshall, of Over, had preached here, but the services had been discontinued "in consequence of the individual to whom the chapel belonged returning and taking possession of it" (Report, 1834).

<sup>2</sup> A committee of inquiry had found "the spiritual condition of Witton and neighbourhood" very unsatisfactory (District Minute-Book, 1865, August).

was very successful at Moulton,<sup>1</sup> but at the end of 1873 he removed to Nantwich, and, after an interval of more than two years, the work fell into the less competent hands of a Mr. Bird (1876-78). Meanwhile, the church at Northwich had (in 1874) built a school-room in Witton Street.<sup>2</sup> This was for the scholars connected with the Northwich Church. But, being a more convenient room and nearer the people, it was also used for Sunday evening services instead of the old school chapel. For a little while not only Witton and Moulton but also Davenham were worked together, under the general supervision of the Northwich Church—even after Davenham had passed into possession of the Primitive Methodists. There is, however, no recognition of Davenham in the Reports after 1873—only of Moulton and Witton. In 1880 Mr. Smith, from the Nottingham Institute, was appointed evangelist for these missions—a position he occupied for about two years. After his retirement in 1882 the pulpit at Moulton<sup>3</sup> was supplied mainly by lay preachers, and the interest is reported as “in a very feeble condition.” Then in 1884 an evangelist was appointed “for a brief period on trial”—Mr. Henry Vasey of the Manchester and Salford City Mission. Witton revived, but Moulton continued “in very low water.” At the end of two years Mr. Vasey’s engagement was terminated, and the Report is that Northwich is “bracing itself” up to carry on the work. The conducting of services at Moulton was placed with students from Lancashire College, while those at Witton Street were undertaken by laymen of the Northwich Church. On the whole this arrangement has gone on ever since, with results more or less encouraging. Six years ago, however, Witton ceased to be a preaching station,<sup>4</sup> and services were confined to Moulton. Here things have recently shown signs of improvement. The Sunday school, which had lapsed, has been recommenced; two Northwich gentlemen, Messrs. Cross and Harrison, have been delegated to superintend the work; senior students have been engaged to supply on Sundays; occasional week-night services have been held; extensive repairs of the fabric have been undertaken, and a special evangelistic mission is contemplated. Altogether, the outlook for this old church is brightening.

It may be added that, according to the district minute-book,

<sup>1</sup> In 1872 the chapel was renovated at a cost of £130.

<sup>2</sup> With accommodation for 350 scholars, and 3 class-rooms (Report, 1874).

<sup>3</sup> Witton, according to the Report, seems to disappear for a time. The building had been occupied by the Northwich congregation while their new chapel was going up.

<sup>4</sup> Its main purpose, of course, is to serve for a Sunday school.



"the townships of Witton, Marston, and places adjacent" were the centre of an evangelistic enterprise in and about 1865, the Committee setting aside £25 for the work, and Northwich undertaking to superintend. But it had small apparent success. Witton and Marston are "in an unsatisfactory state" is the Report of Dec. 17, 1866.

*Grants.*—1865, Sept., £25 (of the £50 for special effort from Executive) set apart by District Committee for the townships of Witton, Marston, and places adjacent, under the supervision of Northwich. 1866, Witton and Marston, £25. 1867, no grant asked for (in an unsatisfactory state). 1869, Witton, Moulton, and Davenham, £60. 1870, Witton and Moulton, £50. 1871, Witton, Moulton, and Davenham, £50. 1872-73, Witton and Moulton, £50. 1874, Witton and Moulton, £35. 1875, Witton and Moulton, £20 and £25. 1876, Witton and Moulton, £50. 1877, Witton and Moulton, £60. 1878, Witton and Moulton, £50. 1879, Witton and Moulton, £40. 1880, Witton and Moulton, £40 (or £50 if the evangelist has £100). 1881-82, Witton and Moulton, £50. 1883-85, Moulton, £25, or £40 (with minister). 1886, Moulton and Witton, £25. 1887-88, Moulton and Witton, £20. 1889-90, Moulton and Witton, £15. 1891, Moulton and Witton, £25. 1892-94, Moulton and Witton, £20. 1895-99, Moulton and Witton, £15. 1900, Moulton, £15 (services at Witton discontinued). 1901-5, Moulton, £10. 1906, Moulton, £12.

### Sale.

Cottage services, commenced by some gentlemen from Manchester in Cross Street about the year 1800, were the humble origin of this large and influential church. There was here long before this date a Presbyterian chapel<sup>1</sup> which, with its endowment of £40 a year, lapsed into the hands of the Unitarians. It is quite likely that seceders from the chapel formed the bulk of the congregation which met in the cottage, but the point is not clear. The cottage was used for some three years, and then the "same (Manchester) friends" resolved "to build a substantial chapel capable of holding about four hundred hearers." The cost was borne mainly by Mr. Robert Spear (the Christian merchant who among other generous things supported at his own expense the students trained by Mr. Roby) and Mr. Arthur Clegg—the former to the extent of two-thirds.<sup>2</sup> The site of the new building was near Sale Bridge. In 1805 a church was formed consisting of twelve persons, and the services for some years were taken by Mr. Ashton—described as "a gentleman of fortune" who "had received some instruction from Mr.

<sup>1</sup> See Urwick, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> Slate's "History of the Lancashire Union," p. 17.



Roby." How long he was in charge is not known, but certainly till after September 1811, when he appears as a subscriber, in the name of Cross Street, of £5, 5s. to the funds of the Cheshire Union. From 1821 to 1826 Mr. Crockford was minister, and, for that period,<sup>1</sup> the church had the assistance of the Lancashire Union. For the next five years laymen from Manchester supplied the pulpit, and the membership sank to three persons. The settlement of Mr. Gibbon (in 1831)—an ex-Wesleyan local preacher who had joined Mr. Roby's church—was followed by revival. Unhappily, however, Mr. Gibbon "adopted hyper-Calvinistic views and also took a prejudice against Sunday schools." The people left him. He removed to Warrington in 1841, and at the end of that year the building was closed. At that time the sole surviving trustee was the father of the late Mr. Jonathan Lees—memorable as founder, or co-worker in the founding, of nine churches in Lancashire and Cheshire. The old man was on his death-bed and the son, "knowing in whose possession the key was, obtained his father's signature to a note requesting that the key should be given up to him." "Mr. Lees then commenced a Sunday school with seven children, and for a period of about seven years he walked 'to and fro' from Manchester every Sunday, sending by boat on the Saturday the provisions needed for himself and those whom he took with him to help him."<sup>2</sup> This work must have been begun immediately upon Mr. Gibbon's retirement, since in May 1842 the chapel was also re-opened for public worship. At the request of the (new) trustees the Rev. Edward Morris, then minister of Stretford, undertook to conduct services—assisted by Mr. Lees and junior students of the Lancashire College. In October 1842 the church was reconstituted (with eleven members), and one of its first acts was a cordial invitation to Mr. Morris to become the pastor. Still retaining the pastorate of the church at Stretford he consented, and held the joint-charge till the rapid growth and enlarged opportunities of the church at Sale determined him to give up all his time to the latter. In March 1852 it was found necessary to think of a new chapel. In the same year one to accommodate 500 persons was erected in Montague Road, on land presented by S. Brooks, Esq. Mr. Morris was Secretary of the Union from 1866 to 1870, and then resigned, because "whilst most anxious in every way to serve the interests of the Union, he yet felt that the constantly increasing duties of his pastorate

<sup>1</sup> But not longer (Slate, p. 48).

<sup>2</sup> From sermon by Mr. Pinn, of Stockport (on the death of Mr. Lees, Sept. 1873), based on personal talk with Mr. Lees, and his son the Rev. Jonathan Lees.

rendered it impracticable for him satisfactorily to discharge the duties of secretary." In 1870 the fact that the chapel was enlarged to nearly twice its former capacity gave visible proof of his increased duties. In that year new schools and a caretaker's house were built. In 1882 Mr. Morris resigned and was appointed honorary pastor—an occasion which called forth the following tribute from his successor in the office of secretary: ". . . It may be doubted whether there is any man now living to whom this Union is more deeply indebted for great and various services extending over forty years and more. In addition to this he has been the means of rearing from its infancy, and cherishing to this day, one of the strongest churches in the county, while with regard to more public duties he has filled for many years the honourable position of Guardian of the Poor and other offices. As a signal proof of the honour in which Mr. Morris was held, men of all creeds and parties in Sale contributed to the noble testimonial which his congregation raised for him on his retirement. He has elected to dwell among his own people, and, as honorary pastor, to give them the benefit of his help and counsel. His many friends will rejoice at this decision, and will pray that his remaining years may prove a calm and peaceful and happy Sabbath of rest after such a busy and laborious career."

In November 1883 the Rev. Adam Scott of Lancaster commenced his ministry. In 1885 land was purchased adjoining the church and a manse built. Three years later the Sunday school was enlarged, and a new three-manual organ placed in the church. In 1892 Mr. Scott accepted a call to the Chapel Street Church, Southport, and was succeeded in 1893 by the Rev. T. Hallett Williams, of Accrington. In 1898 mission work was opened in the district known as Roebuck Lane, and this prospered so far, especially in the Sunday school department, as to lead to the purchase of land and the erection of new premises in 1905. Mr. Williams removed to Rock Ferry in 1903, and the present minister, the Rev. Thomas Webster, of Dundas Street, Sunderland, entered upon his charge in September 1905.

### Barton and Farndon.

Barton is mentioned in 1816 as "another scene," with Tattenhall, "of Mr. Hitchin's labours," and as a "cause" which seemed prosperous. In 1862—its next appearance in the Re-

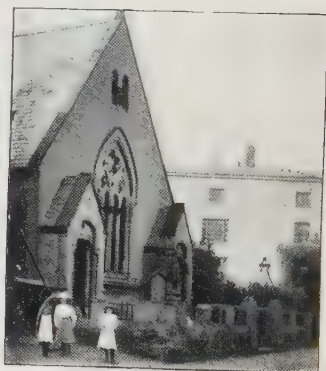




BARTON.



MALPAS.



TATTENHALL.



FARNDON.

ports—it is still an out-station of Tattenhall, called Barton Chapel. It remained such till 1886.

But it was such only “in a sense.” Though more or less intimately connected with Tattenhall, says the 1869 Report, “its services are chiefly conducted by Mr. Harris, a gentleman who, whilst engaged in business at Liverpool, devotes himself to Christian work in this village.” In 1871 the Union voted the usual £10, on condition that the people raised £5 among them towards the support of the minister, Mr. Todd. They raised the £5 and more, but excused themselves from handing it to the minister on the ground that they had spent £10 “in repairing the preaching room and procuring a new stove!”<sup>1</sup> It seemed to the Union that a people who could raise £10 for extraordinary expenses, and admitted, at the same time, that their voluntary offerings had largely increased, might very well be left to themselves. Accordingly, after 1872 there was no further grant. As already said its nominal connection with Tattenhall came to an end in 1886, and for the next six years it fared alone. Then, in the autumn of 1891, Mr. Huxley, of Malpas, “intimated to the Executive Committee that in his judgment the time had come when it would be wise” to re-unite Barton with Farndon under the superintendence of an evangelist, who should be paid £80 a year by help of a £50 grant from the Union; and to this proposal the Assembly, in April 1892, gave cordial assent.

Farndon is about two miles from Barton. Its spiritual (or perhaps rather its Nonconformist) destitution touched the heart of Mr. Huxley as early as 1881, when he urged once and again in meetings of the District Committee the urgency of its need for a Nonconformist place of worship, or at least some kind of Nonconformist service. The Committee was sympathetic, and resolved to ask the Executive “to place £10 in the hands of Mr. Huxley and Mr. Barnes for the purpose of carrying on services at Farndon.”<sup>2</sup> But since “Mr. Huxley introduced the question of opening a preaching station at Farndon,” in January 1887, it appears that so far nothing had been done. Moreover, it seemed likely that nothing would be done by the Committee, when its deputation reported in the following December that, “having paid a visit to the place and made full inquiries, they were of opinion that we should not undertake the responsibility of building a chapel and commencing services at present.” Mr. Huxley, therefore, at length built a “neat little chapel” himself, “entirely at his own cost,” and had it opened on September 3, 1889, by the Rev. Dr. Macfadyen, of Chorlton Road, Man-

<sup>1</sup> Report, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> District Minute, July 1881.



chester, "under circumstances of great encouragement." The average Sunday evening congregation soon came to be "about a hundred; a church was formed which in a few months grew from ten to sixteen communicants; and the services became a manifest blessing to the village."

Mr. Huxley's proposal in 1891 to unite Farndon and Barton under an evangelist was not of his own suggestion. It had been suggested to him as desirable by the District Committee in October 1889, and he had come to see its wisdom. The first evangelist, under this new arrangement, was the Rev. W. Thomas, of Bishop's Castle, who settled in May 1892. Mr. Huxley expressed the hope that such progress would take place as to make a grant of £50 unnecessary at the end of two years. The sequel has not been quite so encouraging. But good work has been done, perhaps none better of the kind the Union exists specially to promote.

In July 1896 the Rev. L. M. Davies succeeded Mr. Thomas, lately gone to Wrexham; and in the same year the death of Mr. Jackson, a diligent and faithful worker, was a serious blow to Barton. But other helpers came forward, resulting in "an all-round improvement"; while as to Farndon the state of the congregations, the church membership, the prayer meeting, and the Bible classes all bespoke progress.

In 1899 "all-round progress" is the Report from Farndon; while the lack of progress at Barton is explained by the statement that "the congregation being largely made up of farm labourers and domestic servants removals are frequent and numerous." This year Mr. Huxley "added to his generous gift of a year ago when he handed over, in trust, the Farndon chapel to the Cheshire Union, by conveying to the Union, under the same trust, the cottage property adjoining the chapel." In 1902 Mr. Huxley gave fresh proof of "his interest in the Farndon church and his care for its minister," by presenting two cottages to the Union, out of the rents of which, for a few years, part of the premium of a life policy is to be paid on behalf of the minister. In the course of the following summer this best friend of Farndon—this modest labourer "in the cluster of churches about Malpas, with which his name will ever be honourably associated"—was taken away at a ripe old age. It seemed, and surely in some senses was, a grievous loss; but such losses sometimes react beneficially upon the bereaved and so turn to gain. They may, for example, quicken the spirit of self-reliance. This appears to have been the case with Farndon. In October of 1903 a new school-room, costing £365, was opened by the

Mayoress of Chester, and left a burden of debt which has pressed very heavily. Since then, too, the losses by removals have been unusually severe. Thus in 1905 "twelve members were transferred from Farndon and three from Barton." Yet one can detect no trace of despair or even weariness. If there have been great losses, it is gratefully noted that there have been considerable gains; and if the load of debt is heavy, it is there to be lightened and removed as soon as possible. It does one good to read of such work—sustained patiently and hopefully in the midst of difficulties with which more fortunate churches have but very slight acquaintance. May these extend to the pastor of Farndon and Barton the practical sympathy which he and his little band of fellow-workers so well deserve!

*Grants.*—Barton: 1865, £10, from special fund. 1866-67, £10. 1868-69, £15. 1870, £10. 1871, £10 (on condition that the people raise £5 amongst them). 1872, £10. Farndon: 1890, £10; 1891, £10. Barton and Farndon: 1892-95, £50. 1896, £50 (£25 while without a minister). 1897-1903, £50. 1904, £55. 1905-06, £55 (plus £5 from special fund).

## CHESTER DISTRICT.

### SECRETARIES.

|                          |   |   |   |                   |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Rev. Thomas Peters       | . | . | . | 1865-1876         |
| Rev. P. W. Darnton, B.A. | . | . | . | 1876-1880         |
| Rev. F. Barnes, B.A.     | . | . | . | 1880-1892         |
| Rev. W. Jones            | . | . | . | 1892 <sup>1</sup> |
| Rev. F. Barnes           | . | . | . | 1892-1893         |
| Rev. J. W. Clark         | . | . | . | 1893-1896         |
| Mr. J. G. Hope           | . | . | . | 1896-1900         |
| Rev. D. Wynne Evans      | . | . | . | 1900              |

### Boughton.

BOUGHTON, a suburb of Chester, was, in the end of the eighteenth century, the residence of the Rev. Philip Oliver (died 1800), an ex-minister of the Established Church, who initiated a remarkable Nonconformist movement in his mother's parlour (at Boughton Lodge), and, when this became too small, converted the spacious coach-house into a chapel, where he built up a church said to have numbered about 500 communicants.<sup>2</sup> After his death the "cause" was transferred to the Octagon Chapel, Chester; and Oliver's chapel seems to have been left unoccupied. But early in 1814 the estate was purchased by a generous friend of the Union,<sup>3</sup> who reconstructed Oliver's Chapel, and opened it in May for public worship every Lord's Day as well as once in each week. "At present," says the Report of 1814, "the attendance is not very numerous, though it gradually increases; but there is every reason to believe that if a minister could be procured who would confine his exertions to that neighbourhood,<sup>4</sup> a large congregation would be collected; and there is perhaps no part of the county in which there is a greater abundance of

<sup>1</sup> In consequence of resolution of Executive that it is unadvisable for any representative of a grantee Church to be a member of the Executive—passed February—Mr. Jones resigned and Mr. Barnes resumed.

<sup>2</sup> Urwick, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Williamson was the gentleman's name. See Urwick, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> The Rev. James Pridie had divided his "exertions" between Boughton and Malpas (Urwick, p. 99).

ignorance and vice, and, consequently, a louder call for Christian sympathy and effort." What help, if any, was given is not stated; and, so far as the Union was concerned, the place fell out of sight for fifty years. Vigorous and successful work, however, was carried on for years in Oliver's Chapel, and also, later (?), in an old warehouse at the top of Sandy Lane—its leaders being members of Queen Street Church. Then in 1866 a school chapel was built to hold 150 persons; and, on the 23rd March 1867, fifteen persons were formed into a church distinct from the mother church at Queen Street. "Mr. Richard Jones was elected sole deacon and treasurer. As the church grew in numbers others were joined to him in the diaconate, but, humanly speaking, he was the principal founder of the cause, giving money, time, and thought without grudging." When Boughton reappears in the Report (1869), it has a church of twenty-four members and a Sunday school of ninety scholars. Along with Chriselton—a small station dependent upon it—Boughton received a grant of £40. At this date it had no pastor, but in April "obtained the services" of the Rev. T. Sleath, late of Lancashire College. The "cause" is spoken of as if quite recent, and one of Mr. Sleath's first tasks was more completely to "organise" the church. This he did successfully, and could report<sup>1</sup> an addition to its strength of nineteen persons. For some reason unnamed, however, he resigned in August 1870, and, after an interval of eleven months (July 1871), was succeeded by the Rev. R. W. Lloyd, of Wollerton, Shropshire, who held the pastorate until his death in 1881, and earned a warm tribute from the Union to his devotedness in labour, his singleness of purpose, and his fervour of spirit.<sup>2</sup> After a period of less than six years following his settlement Boughton became independent, and, with the exception of one drawback (in 1875), the rate of progress was reported as continuously accelerating. In his first year a few months rendered "a larger chapel indispensable," and the "quicken'd life of Boughton made itself felt in the out-station of Chriselton." In April 1873 a new chapel, costing £2200 and capable of seating 450 persons, was opened, and soon almost filled by the evening congregations. At the same time (1874) the income from pew rents went up from £24 to £120, and the church showed a clear increase of twenty members. In addition £500 was raised towards the chapel debt. For 1875 the returns were no less gratifying, and the grant asked was half what it had been—£20 instead of £40.

<sup>1</sup> In 1870.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1882.

Finally, the Assembly was informed in 1877 that "this church conveys to the Union, along with many thanks for the assistance hitherto afforded, the assurance that it will require the assistance no longer."

Since Mr. Lloyd's death the ministers have been the Rev. T. Phillips, of Builth, from 1883 to February 1885; the Rev. B. Hargreaves, of Nottingham Institute, from 1885 to 1887; the Rev. John Morgan, of London, from 1888 to 1900; the present minister, the Rev. J. L. Jones, of Abersychan, Monmouthshire, from 1902.

*Grants.*—1869, £40. 1870, £35. 1871-74, £40. 1875-76, £20.

#### HANDBRIDGE.

The church here owes its origin to the labours of the Rev. Philip Oliver, that evangelical clergyman who seceded from the Establishment towards the close of the eighteenth century and retired to Boughton Lodge. "In 1796 Mr. Oliver held preaching services in Handbridge, and gathered a few children around him in Greenway Street, and formed a Sunday school; <sup>1</sup> and it is pretty certain that this was the first Sabbath school ever held on the Handbridge side of the river. Early in the next century the work was taken up by the late Mr. John Hope and Mr. John Evans, members of Queen Street. The latter laboured here faithfully for nearly fifty years as superintendent of the school, and during this period religious services were held in the afternoon of each Sabbath. In 1866 the school was closed for some reason, but in 1868 it was reopened by Mr. Thomas Reeves, assisted by the late Mr. Isaac Brown, and has continued in a flourishing state to this day." In 1879 a church (separate from Queen Street, of which it had hitherto been a branch) was formed by the Rev. P. W. Darnton, B.A. Its earliest membership numbered thirty persons, and its first minister was Mr. J. T. Higgins, who as evangelist had been at work on the spot "for some years." <sup>2</sup> The old chapel in Greenway Street now soon became too "small and inconvenient," and a new one (to seat 400) was built "in the front street." The Duke of Westminster gave the site and also contributed largely towards the building fund, but the most generous donor was the late Mr. R. S. Hudson. <sup>3</sup> Mr. Higgins resigned in 1883 after months of illness, during which things sank low.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jones, the present minister, says: "We possess the silk banner made 110 years ago, with the date upon it."

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1880.

<sup>3</sup> Report of 1883. The cost was £2100.



A new departure was a necessity "if the cause was not to come to an ignominious end."<sup>1</sup> A deputation, therefore, from the county Executive met a joint committee of the local churches in Chester to discuss the situation. The result was a decision "to commit the oversight of the church" for a time "to the local Committee, which should adopt such measures for the revival of the cause, and the securing of a pastor, as it might deem desirable." Mr. Hudson—who was contributing the greater part of the minister's salary—and the church, both heartily concurred. Then early in 1884 a call was given to Rev. W. Jones, of Gore, Herefordshire, and with his settlement the church entered upon what has proved to be a most prosperous career.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hudson died in 1884, and his failure to provide for a promised contribution towards the debt<sup>3</sup> on the chapel at once yoked Mr. Jones to a heavy burden. But, chiefly by his exertions, it was cleared off before 1887. In March of that year Mr. Hudson's donation of £50, guaranteed for three years, expired and the church had to meet the deficiency; but, with some additional help from the Union, it more than did so.<sup>4</sup> The spirit of the people is illustrated by a fact mentioned in the 1889 Report, that when it was resolved to build a new Sunday school on land behind the chapel given by the Duke of Westminster, "a number of the men in the congregation" undertook "to clear the ground and to dig out the foundation, thus effecting a saving probably of from £50 to £60." The school was built in 1890, at a final cost of £1100, towards which his Grace of Westminster (besides the land) gave £130 from first to last. In 1894 the debt on this stood at £350. In 1897 it had been gradually reduced to £160. In 1898 it disappeared—again through Mr. Jones's persistency. Moreover, material expansion seems to have gone hand in hand with spiritual growth—as, in fact, its natural outcome. Year by year the Reports speak of increase, or, at least, of sustained and happy work in church and school. "Our church and school," says Mr. Jones, "have more than trebled during my ministry." The record is as pleasant as it is rare.

Handbridge is worked in connection with the little church at Trevallyn, built by a farmer in 1838, and also with Lavister, where a chapel was built in 1889: "Chiefly," says Mr. Jones, "through the influence of Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard, who are still faithful members." "Ours," he adds, "is the only place of worship in the village,

<sup>1</sup> Report of 1884.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The church recognised this last year when it made "presentations" to Mr. and Mrs. Jones on the completion of his twenty-first year of ministry.

<sup>3</sup> £900.

<sup>4</sup> Salary raised to £120.

and the Church and Sunday school are in a flourishing condition." Both places were in connection with Queen Street until they were, with the consent of all parties, united to Handbridge in 1880. The 1893 Report puts the average congregation at Lavister as 105, and at Trevallyn as 47. In 1899 the average attendance at the *three* places is given as 310—with 52 at the week-night services.

*Grants.*—Handbridge: 1880, £25 (on condition that the minister have at least £100). 1881, £30. 1882–83, £35 (in 1882 the total amount of the weekly offering was £26, 3s. 2d., with 180 in the congregation and 45 members). 1884–86, £50. 1887–90, £60 (on condition that the minister have at least £120). 1891, £55. 1892–93, £50. 1894, £45. 1895, £40. 1896–97, £35. 1898–99, £30. 1900, £25. 1901, £20 (last grant).

### Northgate Congregational Church, Chester.<sup>1</sup>

The Northgate Congregational Church is a neat, unpretentious building, situated in one of the main thoroughfares of Chester and near to a large suburban population. The foundation-stone was laid on the 23rd of July 1874 by the Hon. J. G. Dodson, M.P. for the city, and in the following year, on the 22nd of July, it was opened for public worship. There is no gallery, but accommodation is provided for 500 worshippers.

At the rear of the church stands a suite of rooms used for Sunday school purposes, consisting of a lofty hall, capable of seating 400 or 500 people, with a smaller hall attached, but separated only by a portable partition, which is removed on special occasions, together with a library, infants' school-room, and several other class-rooms. The whole stack of buildings, including the site, cost about £7000, all of which has been paid. The nucleus of the church and congregation which now assemble within its walls migrated from Common Hall Street, where they had been accustomed to worship under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. Peters. The origin of the church may be traced back to the Rev. Philip Oliver, of Great Boughton, who was educated and ordained as a clergyman of the Established Church.

The congregation which Mr. Oliver gathered together at Boughton found a spiritual home, after his death in 1800, in the Octagan Chapel, City Road, which at the time was under the care of the celebrated Charles of Bala. Among the many active members of that church none was more prominent than Mr. Wilcoxon, who, with a few earnest men, felt it to be their duty to

<sup>1</sup> Taken substantially from sketch of the church's history by Rev. F. Barnes.

try and found another church in a neglected part of the city. For this purpose, in the year 1808, they took a room in Common Hall Street, which, prior to the erection of Queen Street Congregational Church, had been the meeting-place of its earlier members and adherents.

The labours of Mr. Wilcoxon were much appreciated, and he continued to preach in this room without any remuneration until his death. About this time the people determined to build a chapel, and did so in 1839. After Mr. Wilcoxon's death the pulpit supplies had been drawn chiefly from the Calvinistic Methodist body, and the liturgy of the Established Church had been regularly used, but in the year 1842 it was resolved to give up the liturgy and also to adopt Congregational principles. The newly-constituted Independent church had for its first minister the Rev. H. Marchmont, who settled in August 1843, and four years later removed to London. He was succeeded (but not till August 1848) by the Rev. F. Jones, of Runcorn, who held the charge till the end of 1850, and then resigned on account of failing health. The next pastor was the Rev. J. K. Smith, whose stay was still shorter—from the latter part of 1852 to the following summer. After another long interval he was followed—in 1857—by the Rev. Thomas Peters, who not only faithfully discharged his ministerial duties during a lengthened pastorate in Common Hall Street, but greatly assisted in the erection of the new and commodious church which arose in Northgate. Soon after the opening of the new building Mr. Peters removed to Widnes, where he closed his ministry not long before his decease, which took place in Liverpool.

In July 1879 the Rev. F. Barnes, B.A., who for more than thirteen years had been minister of Oxton Road Congregational Church, Birkenhead, undertook the pastorate. Within two years of his settlement, about £2000 was raised for the building of the school-room and the erection of the organ and the beautifying of the church. In 1902 he retired to Liverpool, with a fine record of thirty-six years' devoted service in Cheshire alone, besides some years at Morley, in Yorkshire. The present minister, the Rev. W. H. Towers, for seventeen years pastor of Oldham Road Church, Manchester, settled in 1903, and under him "considerable progress has been made." Also, internal alterations have been made to the "premises," rendering them more suitable for their purpose.

## THE LATE MR. SAMUEL RIGBY, J.P.

Connected with Northgate in his latter days was a notable friend of the Union and its Chairman in 1888—Mr. Samuel Rigby, J.P., who died at Chester, December 2, 1890, in his seventy-third year.

For more than fifty years he was an active Christian worker—first at Roby Chapel, Manchester, then at Poland Street—from which originated the church at Oldham Road ; then at Oldham Road itself, where he became a deacon and for many years superintendent of the Sunday school. Afterwards he joined the Longsight Church, and did good service there. We next find him connected with Wycliffe Church, Warrington ; and, as to the regard in which he was held in that communion, the following resolution, passed at a meeting convened two days after his death, bears witness :—

“This meeting seeks to place on record its high appreciation of Mr. Rigby’s personal character, and especially of the varied and signal services he rendered, along with Mrs. Rigby, to this church for many years. They are confident that his name will ever stand honourably and gratefully associated with the history and prosperity of this church, with its buildings and with its manifold institutions. He served them all with unstinting service of time and means, and his name will not be willingly suffered to die.”

Mr. Rigby’s health by-and-by beginning to decline, he retired from the firm of which he was a partner, and removed to the city of Chester. Here he entered the fellowship of the church at Northgate, under the pastoral care of the Rev. F. Barnes, B.A. In a sermon, preached a few days after his death, Mr. Barnes thus spoke regarding him : “While help was given in every direction, irrespective of creed or denomination, he was very true to the minister and church of his choice. In countless ways he gave practical proof of his fealty. As a deacon he devoted much time and thought to the welfare of the community with which he was identified. Twice a week, as well as twice on Sundays, he was found in the house of God, unless prevented by sickness. Neither pleasure nor business ever kept him away. His whole nature was permeated with a Christ-like spirit. His prayers were solemn, devout, tender. He breathed the spirit of devotion. With the abandonment of a child, he threw himself into every form of Christian activity.” To show how high he stood in the esteem of the members of our Union, it is sufficient to mention that he was called to its office of Chairman for the year 1888. He was





MATTHEW HENRY'S CHAPEL,  
CROOK STREET, CHESTER.



*Exterior*



*Interior*



QUEEN STREET, CHESTER.

buried in the Warrington Cemetery on December 6, 1890, in the presence of a large concourse of true mourners, including many representatives of various causes he had generously helped and countenanced in his lifetime. Truly did the *Chester Chronicle* say that "his noble, personal character, his generous disposition, and his genial courtesy greatly endeared him to all" who knew him.<sup>1</sup>

### Queen Street, Chester.

This church owed its origin to a secession from the congregation in Crook Street, which took place in 1768. Matthew Henry had been minister of Crook Street (1687-1712), and in his time it was Presbyterian and orthodox. His successor, the Rev. John Gardner, held the pastorate from 1713 till his death in 1765. He seems to have shown a tendency to Arianism in his later years—a tendency which became more pronounced in his co-pastor and successor, the Rev. J. Chidlaw. Consequently a number of Independents in the congregation, together with the orthodox "remnant" of the Presbyterians, felt driven to separate in the year stated. "Attempts have been made to belittle this secession and to attribute it to other causes than to the doctrinal teaching of Matthew Henry's successors. But this is totally untrue, for the son of one of the seceders has left on record that it was dissatisfaction with the Arian views which prevailed at Crook Street that led them to come out and form a new congregation. He also knew some of the other seceders, and was well acquainted with the whole of the facts; and his testimony has been confirmed by that of other families who joined in the secessions, one of whom still worships at Queen Street."<sup>2</sup>

Services were held at first in a room "belonging to the Smith's Company, and situated on the south side of Common Hall Street." For a time the services took the form of meetings "chiefly for prayer"; but occasionally a minister was found to preach, and of these the one who rendered greatest help was Mr. Jenkins, afterwards Dr. Jenkins, of Wrexham. He preached to an audience of 200 and more during the winter of 1769. In the spring of 1770 a larger room had become necessary, and the people moved to "an upper room" on the other side of the

<sup>1</sup> Abridged from account (by Mr. Joseph Wood) in 1891 Report.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. J. G. Hope is responsible for this paragraph.

street, with accommodation for 300 or 400. Here, among others, Captain Scott preached and otherwise manifested keen interest in the "cause." On January 30, 1772, a church of nine persons was constituted by the Rev. Benjamin Evans, of Llanwchlyn—signing, each and all, a form of covenant, which set forth articles of faith and church order, and is still extant in an old MS. church-book.<sup>1</sup>

On October 30 the Rev. W. Armitage, previously minister at Delph and Haton, Yorkshire, became first minister of the infant church, and so continued till his death on March 25, 1794, aged fifty-six years. In less than five years after his settlement (on May 1, 1777) a new chapel, built in Queen Street, "on the ground formerly used as the Tithing Croft," was opened.<sup>2</sup> It is described as "sixty feet in front and forty feet in depth," with a minister's house on the south side and a vestry on the north, the latter surrounded by what was meant to be and became a cemetery.<sup>3</sup> Some months after Mr. Armitage's death Mr. William Thorpe was chosen pastor and "laboured" for a year, when he removed to Bristol. At a later time he became well known as Dr. Thorpe and an "eminent" preacher, much in request for "special occasions."<sup>4</sup> Two years elapsed before the appointment of the new minister, Mr. Moses Taylor, and he too resigned at the end of twelve months through ill health. This occurred in 1799. The fourth minister was the Rev. Ebenezer White, recommended by Mr. Roby of Manchester. He took up his duties on October 17, 1802, was "publicly recognised" on May 19, 1803, approved himself an "ingenious preacher" and "a faithful pastor" for nine years, and died on May 5, 1811. Jointly with Rev. William Evans, of Stockport, he was the Union's first secretary, though prevented from undertaking his due share of the work by "a feeble frame and shattered nervous system." In a notice of him, written by his colleague (October 1811), he is said to have possessed "a soul of superior order" and a "heart formed for the purest attachment." "He was an assiduous student," and "he had a very pleasing talent for poetry; he was found to relish the beauties, and he caught the mantle of the sweet and pensive Cowper."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is read to the members at the communion on the first Sunday in each year.

<sup>2</sup> The trust deed is dated 25th February 1783.

<sup>3</sup> It contains the remains of many of those who took part in the secession, but has long since been closed.

<sup>4</sup> One often meets with him in this connection here and there in Cheshire.

<sup>5</sup> A collection of his "little pieces," "corrected by himself," was "in excellent hands" and soon to be published. "The religious public in general and the serious youth of Cheshire in particular may anticipate considerable profit and amusement from the intended publication."

At this point reference may be made to Mr. Thomas Jones, the first deacon of Queen Street, elected in 1773 while the church was yet in Common Hall Street, and alone in the office till 1780. He seems to have been the leading spirit alike in the business of building the new chapel and in everything else.<sup>1</sup> His prominence as a friend of the Union is proved by the fact of his being chosen one of its first treasurers, and still more clearly by the fact that he gave £20 a year to its funds as long as he lived, and bequeathed to it a legacy which was intended for its benefit during many years after his death.<sup>2</sup> The Rev. James Turner in 1856 speaks of him as "the venerable Thomas Jones whose antique costume and appearance will still be remembered by some in that city." His death is mentioned in the Report of 1814 (July) as recent and sudden, at the age of seventy-six, and also that of another deacon of the Queen Street Church, Mr. C. Williamson.<sup>3</sup>

This Report was written by the Rev. John Reynolds, who had become the successor of Mr. White in the previous autumn, and "continued to labour with great success for five years," when he removed to Romsey, Hants. He "supplemented" Dr. Watt's "Psalms and Hymns" by a compilation of his own, which the congregation used until "the Congregational Hymn Book" was introduced. Then, for five years (1818-23), the church had no pastor. Finally, Mr. John Thorpe, son of their former minister and a student of Blackburn Academy, was chosen by the people. His ordination took place on April 30, 1823, and he held the charge for ten years—for the first seven with a popularity which drew large congregations, for the last three with waning influence. He retired to Huddersfield.

Another interval—this time of two years—led up to the settlement of a student from Highbury College, the Rev. S. Luke, whose wife, when Miss Thompson, wrote the hymn "I think when I read that sweet story of old."<sup>4</sup> He was ordained on July 23, 1835, and remained for twelve years, removing to London in 1847. The chief event of outward note during his time was the enlargement and renovation of the chapel, with the addition of a lecture and school-room in place of premises (including the minister's house), which were pulled down. The

<sup>1</sup> He was a "cutler"; it was he who purchased the ground for the chapel and in whose name the property was put in trust. He left several benefactions to the chapel.

<sup>2</sup> At least down to 1839—£30 (at first, 1815-16), then £10.

<sup>3</sup> These two had given "religious instruction of a catechetical kind" to young people previous to the formation of a regular Sunday school in 1803.

<sup>4</sup> She passed away only this year (1906).

sum of £2088, 10s. was spent in this way.<sup>1</sup> Another deacon deserves mention here, viz., William Cross, who became the first mayor of the city, after the passing of the Municipal Reform Act in January 1836. He passed away during Mr. Luke's ministry.

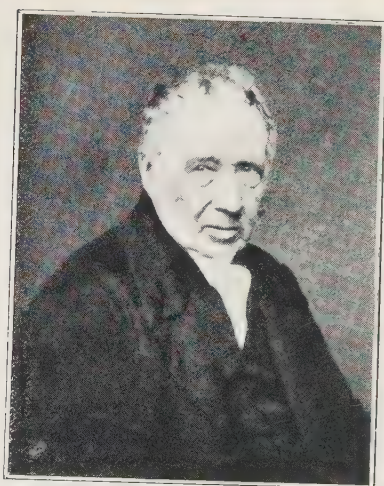
A justly famous missionary and evangelist, the Rev. Richard Knill, followed Mr. Luke. He had laboured as a L.M.S. missionary, first at Nagercoil, South India, and afterwards, when his health gave way, in St. Petersburg. On his return to England, after some time spent in deputation work, he became minister of the Tabernacle, Wotton-under-Edge; but while on a missionary visit to Chester, he so took the heart of the Queen Street people that the result was an enthusiastic invitation, which he accepted. His ministry began in January 1838 and expired with his earthly life on January 2, 1857. "During his ministry the membership of the church was greatly increased, and Queen Street may be said to have enjoyed its greatest era of spiritual usefulness and prosperity. His preaching is still remembered by a few remaining members of the church for its deep earnestness and spiritual power."

Mr. Knill was still living when a student of Western College, Plymouth—Rev. Charles Chapman, M.A.—became minister. "During his stay in Chester he married Miss Knill, the only daughter of his predecessor." In his time the balance of the debt, occasioned by the alterations in 1836, which had remained as an incubus upon the people, was entirely removed. Early in 1864 Mr. Chapman settled at Percy Chapel, Bath. After seven years at Bath and five at Montreal (from whose university he received the degree of LL.D.) he returned to his old college in 1876 as (Professor and then) Principal, and so continues in honour "unto this day."

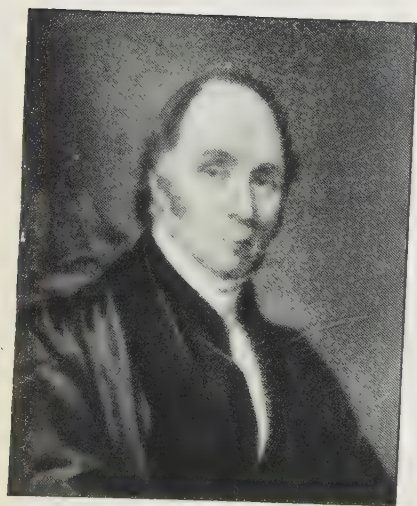
From 1864 to 1870 the Rev. P. C. Barker, M.A., LL.B., occupied the pastorate; from 1870 to 1880 the minister was the Rev. P. W. Darnton, B.A., formerly of Newport, Monmouthshire, and afterwards at Hope Chapel, Wigan, and Clifton Downs, Bristol. In 1872 the Union met at Chester, and Mr. Darnton was Chairman. This being the one hundredth anniversary of Queen Street, he recalled the names of some of his predecessors, and made grateful reference to the way in which the church, "amidst many difficulties and changes," had "flourished and grown."

<sup>1</sup> Re-opened March 1838. "While the work was in progress the use of the Town Hall was granted for the services—a gratifying proof of the liberal working of the Municipal Reform Bill."—*Evangelical Magazine*, 1838, p. 341.





Rev. JAMES TURNER.



Rev. RICHARD KNILL.



Mr. Darnton removed to Wigan in the spring of 1880, and was succeeded, before the end of the year, by Rev. H. Ward Price, New College. He removed to Wycliffe Chapel, Heaton Norris, in 1887. The Rev. James Clark, of Westgate, Burnley, came next, and was pastor from 1888 to 1897. "During his ministry a large P.S.A. was formed, which has been the means of much good, and is still being vigorously carried on." The present minister is the Rev. D. Wynne Evans, of Llanelly, who settled in 1897, and has proved himself not unworthy of the traditions attached to this old and honourable church. May its latter days more than fulfil the promise of its dawn!

Queen Street has been rich in notable deacons as well as ministers. Two have been referred to above; another, "whose saintly character left a deep impress upon the church," in Mr. Luke's time, was Robert Fletcher, watchmaker. He is the man who took "the gold watch out of his pocket and put it upon the collection plate at the missionary meeting when John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, visited the city as a deputation for the Society." Mr. Fletcher's daughter was the second wife of John Reynolds and mother of Dr. Reynolds of Cheshunt College. His son was Dr. Fletcher, formerly of Blackburn, and afterwards of Stepney. No wonder that, with such men as the inspiring spirits of the church, Queen Street stood foremost for many years in support of the Union.<sup>1</sup>

## CHRISELTON.\*

This village is two miles from Chester. Early in the last century, one of the Queen Street members, Mr. Hodson, provided a preaching place, with house attached, and gave the rent, with the interest from a sum invested in Consols, towards the cost of supplying the pulpit. It was at first intended by him to be attached to Queen Street, but influences were brought to bear upon him, and it was connected with Tattenhall, some six miles further in the country, which was under the pastoral care of the late Rev. John Morris. He made a provision that if preaching were from any cause discontinued, the place was to revert to him or his family. In early years successful work was done principally by one of the Queen Street members acting with Mr. Morris. When Tattenhall gave up the work in 1851 it was transferred to Queen Street, and services were held by lay preachers from the latter and its minister.

<sup>1</sup> Several interesting facts in the preceding have been kindly furnished by Mr. J. G. Hope.

After Boughton became an Independent church, Queen Street consented in 1872 to transfer it to that church as a help to them, there being a small endowment of rent of cottage and interest from the money in Consols. When the Wesleyans commenced work there and put up a new chapel, it was felt no longer necessary to keep open the place, and, by arrangement with Mr. Hodson's representatives, it was given up, they taking the building and house, and the money in Consols being handed over to the County Union, although there was no claim upon them to do so. This is the origin of what appears in the Reports as "Hodson's Estate."

#### BOUGHTON AND HANDBRIDGE.

From an early time, in the close of the eighteenth century, Queen Street members worked Sunday schools at these places, which afterwards became preaching stations, until they declared themselves independent—the former in 1872 and the latter in 1879. The members living in the neighbourhood were transferred to make the nuclei of the churches.

#### HOOLE ROAD.\*

This was another preaching place, which was started in 1887 by one of the Queen Street members in a granary attached to his farm. Some useful work was done, the congregation averaging about forty people; until the Primitive Methodists opened a place in the neighbourhood, which led the worshippers to decide to attend there, and preaching was discontinued in 1894.

#### UPTON.

This now flourishing cause was commenced about 1858 by one or two energetic young men of Queen Street. After holding services in the open air, when favourable, a wheelwright's shop was obtained and used for services on Sundays. A chapel, capable of holding 120 persons, was erected in 1860, at a cost of £250, one of the opening services at which was conducted by Dr. Raffles of Liverpool, and it is believed this service was the last he conducted, as he passed away soon afterwards. The work was carried on with varying success until Mr. Sidney Clark,

one of the Queen Street members, settled there with his wife, both of whom took it in hand with earnestness and vigour. As a result a number of people in the village were induced to attend, and a better provision for the work was deemed necessary. Accordingly, a handsome building, with a school-room which can be thrown into it, capable of accommodating 250 people, has been erected, mainly by Mr. Clark's energies, at a cost of £1500. Sunday morning school, open P.S.A. in the afternoon, preaching at night, with various meetings in the week, are all well attended. The members at Upton are part of the Queen Street Church, and are under the pastoral care of Rev. D. Wynne Evans.

#### WERVIN.

Recently a room has been obtained in this small village, some four and a half miles from Chester, and fitted up for services in connection with Queen Street, through the Upton branch. It is supplied by lay preachers from the Congregational churches, and there is promise of a useful little cause being established there.

These latter two places are all that are now connected with Queen Street.<sup>1</sup>

### Malpas and Threapwood.

Independency originated at Malpas in 1814, when a few Chester friends obtained a small farmhouse and converted it into a chapel, which was opened in due form by the Rev. J. Thorp, of Bristol.<sup>2</sup> The Rev. James Pridie, who gave this and other information about Malpas forty-nine years later,<sup>3</sup> lived and laboured here till 1816, preaching once a Sunday also at Boughton in Chester; and then removed to New Windsor Chapel, Manchester. After his departure the cause drooped, but was kept alive by the voluntary services of Rev. Messrs. Harris and Reynolds,<sup>4</sup> together with supplies from Oswestry and elsewhere. In January 1821 a church was formed,<sup>5</sup> and for the next three years was super-

<sup>1</sup> The foregoing particulars about the Queen Street Mission Stations have been supplied by Mr. J. G. Hope.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 5th Report (1814) it was opened in September 1813.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Mr. Urwick dated Halifax, March 23, 1863.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Harris preached on Sunday afternoons, Mr. Reynolds on Wednesday evenings (7th Report, 1816).

<sup>5</sup> Consisted at first of five members (see Report of 1822). Preaching was also commenced at Oldcastle, two miles off.



vised by the Rev. John Morris, of Tattenhall, and the Rev. George B. Kidd, of Doddington, Whitechurch. The first pastor was a Rev. Mr. Williams, who stayed two years (1824-26). In his time the chapel—"very small and inconvenient"—was exchanged for "a larger place," purchased from the Methodists of the New Connexion.

In 1828 the Rev. H. Birch—"formerly a student at Blackburn and late of Oldham"—became the pastor.<sup>1</sup> Before he left (1834) the station at Threapwood was opened (June 1833)—in the upper room of an unoccupied maltkiln, capable of holding 150 persons, and rented "for the small sum of a pound a year." Four or five pounds were spent on the fitting and furnishing of it, and there was soon a congregation of about 40 or 50, besides a Sunday school of 50.<sup>2</sup>

Two lay pastors, Mr. C. Belk (1836-39) and Mr. S. M. Coombes (1842-45), helped to fill the gap between 1824 and 1846. Special reference is made also to the disinterested labours of Mr. Morris and his friends at Tattenhall, and of Mr. Gaythorpe (a Baptist), of Tarporley.<sup>3</sup> Then the Rev. W. Williams was chosen pastor (August 23). He held the office for about six years. In 1849 the state of things at Malpas is reported as "more promising than it has been for some years past," while Threapwood has collected half the amount needed (some £60) for a new chapel;<sup>4</sup> and "Mr. W(illiams) intends to have in future two regular services on the Lord's Day at the Wood instead of one only, as it has been the case hitherto."<sup>5</sup> A year later Malpas returns a membership of 32, a congregation of 75, a Sunday school of 105, with 15 teachers, and an income of "more than £55."

An interesting remark occurs in the next Report (1851): "The church members are *working* Christians. At eight o'clock on Sunday morning they meet for prayer. At the close of the meeting six of the younger members distribute tracts through the whole town . . . then they return to the chapel and take their places as teachers in the school. . . ." In the same Report we hear that Threapwood has cleared off its debt within £20, and that "week evening cottage services are being regularly held in the townships of Normansheath, Oldcastle and Bradley, with an average aggregate attendance of 85 persons, several of whom become

<sup>1</sup> For several years the interest had been in a very low state. Mr. Birch was invited by friends at Chester acting at the request of the Union (Report for 1829).

<sup>2</sup> Cottage services were opened, too, at Kidnall and Tilston (Report for 1834).

<sup>3</sup> Report for 1842.

<sup>4</sup> Opened July 1850, cost £120, seated 120.

<sup>5</sup> "It is hoped that very shortly Malpas, with its auxiliaries, will become a self-sustaining interest" (Report 1849).

occasional attendants at their chapels on the Sabbath." The Report for 1852 tells us that "At Threapwood both a church and a Sunday school have been established . . . and eight new members added to the newly-formed society, whilst the congregation numbers, on an average, sixty adult persons." Malpas, too, has increased; "and, what is of greater moment still, the general feeling in the neighbourhood is much more favourable towards the cause than it used to be." About 1852 Mr. Williams left, and the two places were "supplied" for some years without aid from the Union.

In November 1857, however, Rev. H. Bake, lately of Cowick, "assumed the charge," and with it obtained a grant at the rate of £10. "He opened village stations which had long been unoccupied;" and the effect of his "labours" at Malpas was seen in a considerable increase of the congregation. But an "acute" difficulty in the way of permanent progress was "the very inconvenient position of the church"; and owing to the fact that the land mostly belonged to "a few church proprietors," it was years before it became possible to secure a new and better site. At length, however, this was done and a new chapel erected, with school-room, lecture-room, &c., in the end of 1862.<sup>1</sup> "The attractions of the new sanctuary are evidenced," says the Report, "by an increase of the congregation, especially in the evening." But the next word about the place (1864) is that it is "stationary" and that Mr. Bake has resigned.

Some time in 1865 the Rev. W. Tiller settled; but two years later "stationary" is still the word—except that, by the liberality of some friends of the Union<sup>2</sup> and a "free" loan from the English Chapel Building Society, the chapel debt has been almost cleared. In 1870 Mr. Tiller was succeeded by the Rev. J. L. Jones, who brought about an improvement; and set going efforts for a new chapel at Threapwood. These came to a successful issue in 1874, when the chapel was both built and paid for. Threapwood at this time presented a contrast to Malpas in its prosperity—a fact ascribed by the Union to a lack of "brotherly love and co-operation" in the latter. In May 1875 Mr. Jones left for Witney (in Oxfordshire), with a cordial testimony from the Union to his ministerial devotedness. His place was taken (in the same year) by the Rev. J. H. Brown (of Tunstall, Staffordshire), in whose hands the "cause" at once revived—a sign thereof being the challenge to raise his salary to £150 if the Union would (as it did)

<sup>1</sup> Estimated cost, £1200; debt at opening, £400 (Reports for 1861-63).

<sup>2</sup> Three Cheshire laymen offered £50 each (Report for 1865). In the same year £10 was granted for breaking up new ground at Barton (Report for 1866).

contribute £50. The "revival" continued, and is noted, after eighteen months, as remarkable, at both places. To like effect is the Report for 1877. Next year we are told that "a minister's house has been purchased (at a cost of £500), towards which Mr. Huxley, the senior deacon, has contributed handsomely, besides lending £300, free of interest, for two years."

It is often mentioned (in the Reports) as a reason for generous support that Malpas is one of those purely agricultural places where bad harvests may occasionally, and ecclesiastical or social influence do constantly, militate against success. Still it was realised that even in such a case a too long nursing of the church might be unwise, and so we find that in 1885 a hint was given that the time had come when Malpas and Threapwood should ask for less than the £50 they had been receiving.

A conference, however, between representatives of the two churches and delegates from the Union elicited information which seemed to make it clear that the work could not be maintained at its existing high level "for any less sum," and so the £50 was granted for another year. Then in 1887 it was reduced to £40. For the next two years it was raised to £45, but rather reluctantly, since the Report announced "no progress" but a falling off at Malpas, though not at Threapwood.

In 1890 Mr. Brown closed a fifteen years' ministry by removing to Hythe. His successor, Rev. T. Nicholas, late of Nantmawr, began his work on the first Sunday of 1892, and threw himself into it with an energy and resourcefulness which did much to lift the two churches from a depressed to a flourishing state, as far as circumstances would permit. He removed to Hyde in the autumn of 1895, and for eighteen months the work went on without pastoral supervision; but yet the Rev. J. O. Morgans, who settled early in 1897, is said to have found both churches healthy and vigorous, nor apparently, since that time, have they been anything else.

In 1903 Mr. Morgans transferred his devoted services to King's Norton (Warwickshire), and in the summer of that year Mr. Thomas Huxley died—an irreparable loss which might well have had a daunting effect on the churches he had done so much in various ways to sustain and upbuild. Nevertheless, the first Report after the settlement of the present minister, Rev. W. Plaskett (April 1904), tells us that "these two churches are full of hope."

In 1905 the Report is that, besides increasing its membership and Sunday school, Malpas has undertaken two new stations—Bradley Church and Chorlton Lane Mission—each of which

contributes £5 a year to the support of the ministry; while at Threapwood the membership has been doubled. The latest Report is equally bright; and, in fine, considering the chronic discouragements to which these twin churches have been and are exposed, their record is a noble one and renders them thoroughly worthy of whatever can be done for their support.

*Grants.*—April 1815 to October 1816, paid to Mr. Pridie, £53, 4s.; supplies at Malpas, £18, 5s. In the Reports from 1816 to 1847 the amounts are not specified, but in the body of the Report for 1829 it is stated that the Union had decided “to increase the allowance to the Malpas station to £50 towards the salary of the minister.” Then, in the Report of 1840, we read that “although the Union has ceased to support a stated labourer in the Malpas district . . . it has continued to give . . . a measure of pecuniary aid.” But the grant in May 1846 to April 1847 is £20. 1848, £10. 1849–52, £15. 1858, £5 (half-year). 1859–60, £10. 1861, £20. 1862–63, £30. 1864, £30—at the rate of, but “not applied for.” 1865, at the rate of £30 with minister. 1866, £30. 1867–69, no grant required. Malpas and Threapwood: 1870, £20 with minister. 1871–74, £30. 1875, at the rate of £40 with minister. 1876–77, £50. 1878–79, £45. 1880–86, £50. 1887–90, £45. 1891, £15 without pastor. 1892–95, £40. 1896, £25 without minister. 1897–99, £40. 1900–6, £35.

#### NORBURY.

Norbury is a small agricultural village in the Chester district, several miles from the nearest Congregational church. Its chapel “was got up chiefly by the efforts” of Mr. Huxley. A grant was asked for in 1869 towards the expense of conducting the services, and it received £10 a year till 1872. In that year it was cleared of a debt of £40, by the efforts of the people with Mr. Huxley’s generous aid, and became quite free. From the Report of 1870 we learn that its pulpit was supplied by lay preachers; that it had an average morning congregation of eighty, and an evening one of a hundred, and that it exhibited the signs of “much life and energy.”

#### Runcorn.

Runcorn is named in 1807<sup>1</sup> as one of three places desirous of evangelistic aid and recipients of it to some extent. “At Runcorn also, a populous village and a bathing place of considerable resort in the season, an opening has been made, and a new place is nearly ready for accommodating a congregation. Several of our ministers and some of our Lancashire brethren have arranged to supply the place on week-day evenings until more regular and permanent preaching can be obtained.”

<sup>1</sup> Rev. W. Evans’s sermon, September 17—Introduction.



A foremost agent in the work was the Rev. William Alexander, pastor of the Congregational church at Prescott and a man of apostolic spirit. He held services in a large room of what was then (1807) the principal inn,<sup>1</sup> and, when this proved too expensive, in a private house. Some friends from Warrington, belonging to Lady Huntingdon's connection, followed up his labours, and, in 1818, built the first Congregational church, known as St. John's Chapel. The immediate cause of this advance lay in the action of two Chester ministers, Revs. Messrs. Bridgman and Parry, who first "preached to the people a double lecture" (1817), then established a Sunday school and held services in a large room rented for the purpose, and met with so much encouragement that a chapel became a necessity. The Connectionalists and Congregationalists, always closely allied, worshipped together for some ten years. Then some unpleasantness—now happily forgotten—made a breach, and about six of the congregation began to meet at the house of their leader, Mr. James Sutton. In the course of time the cause of this little flock was taken up by Mr. William Pennington, a property owner of the neighbourhood, who, with his two sons, built for it a chapel and also a small school-room. Under the name of St. Luke's the place was opened early in 1830. The first pastor, Rev. William Robinson, of Airedale College, began his ministry on January 1, 1832. On June 27 a church was formed—Revs. Mr. Millward, of Wigan; John Kelly; and Mr. Widdows, of Liverpool; and Job Wilson, of Northwich, taking part on the occasion. Mr. Wilson's part consisted in an address to the "members" (eleven, including the pastor), who "previously signified, by holding up their right hand, their wish to be so united and in the same manner pledged themselves to walk in all the ordinances of the Gospel."

Mr. John Tomkinson (a Liverpool man, who worked the quarries on Mill Brow and at Runcorn), had been a generous patron of the church, and now—to anticipate a foreseen expansion of the town westward—purchased a more central site and provided means<sup>2</sup> for the building of the present Bethesda Chapel with its school-room. The foundation-stone was laid on August 25, 1834, and the opening ceremony took place on September 29, 1835. At the same time, strange to say, Mr. Robinson, already the pastor for nearly four years, was ordained—the officiating ministers including Mr. Kelly, Dr. Raffles, Mr. Kidd, of Macclesfield, and Mr. Job Wilson. Mr. Robinson removed to West

<sup>1</sup> Supposed to be the "White Hart" (now the "Royal Hotel") near the ferry landing-place.

<sup>2</sup> Nearly £6000.



Haughton, in Lancashire, in the summer of 1839, and was succeeded by the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Elstead (Surrey), on March 29, 1840. He resigned in July 1843. Mr. R. B. Blakehurst, of Rotherham College, who came next, about the beginning of 1844, retired in the February of 1845, and entered the Established Church. His successor, the Rev. Andrew Thomas, of Glasgow University, made an almost equally short stay—from June 1845 to October 1846, and then went to America. The pastorate of the Rev. J. T. Jesson, who had been a missionary at Tahiti, was long by comparison. It extended from January 1847 to June 1853; and had good success at first, but came to a close amid “unpleasant circumstances” which entailed “a serious falling off.” What these were is not stated, but they may well have been occasioned partly by a great trouble which befel the church at this time. This consisted in an utterly unexpected demand for £1200—a charge upon the chapel for which Mr. Tomkinson (not now the prosperous man he was) had failed to provide. Ere long accumulated interest and other expenses increased the debt to more than £1500. The committee of the Lancashire Chapel Building Society came to the rescue with an offer of £700 if the congregation would set themselves to raise the rest. The offer was welcomed, and by the spring of 1857—some eight years later—the burden was gone. But the strain had been severe, and its effects probably not all good. Anyhow Mr. Jesson left before the end of it; and was not followed by another pastor for two years. Then the Rev. W. H. Mann, of Lancashire College, took up the charge; and held it from July 1855 to November 1858, when he removed to Mill Hill Chapel, Blackburn. After a vacancy of twelve months an invitation was accepted by the Rev. A. Howson, of Hartlepool, who began his ministry November 6, 1859, and continued till July 30, 1868. In 1861 a school was built on land behind the chapel at a cost of more than £400—all paid or promised before the day of opening in October; and in 1862 the old chapel of St. Luke’s was renovated with a view to mission purposes, the old Sunday school being converted, at the same time, into a cottage. St. Luke’s has been an out-station of Bethesda Chapel ever since.<sup>1</sup>

Between the time of Mr. Howson’s departure and the present there have been seven pastors: the Rev. Thomas Davies from March 7, 1869, to December 1, 1869; the Rev. S. Yates,

<sup>1</sup> It has now a Sunday school of about 200 scholars, and regular Sunday evening services. New class-rooms (for the senior scholars) have become “absolutely necessary,” and are about to be added.

of Rotherham College, from July 1871 to January 1877, when he settled at Spalding; the Rev. William Robinson,<sup>1</sup> who ended a two years' ministry (1877-1879) by withdrawing to the Church of England; the Rev. J. D. Thomas, of Buckley, from September 1879 to September 1889, when he removed to Derby St., Bolton; the Rev. John Simpson, of Glasgow University—"recently residing at Heaton Moor"<sup>2</sup>—who had the oversight from May 1890 to March 1897; the Rev. Joseph Osborne, M.A., of Mansfield College, who settled and was ordained "under happy and promising auspices" in September 1897—whose removal to Commercial Street, Northampton, in August 1903, was followed by the settlement of the Rev. George White, of Blackburn, in August 1904.

The relation of Runcorn to the Cheshire Union has been definitely established since 1885, when (with Hoylake) the church applied for admission. Before that year it had been printed among the churches of the Chester district—from 1868 onwards—with a remark that it belonged to the Lancashire Union. Previously to 1868 there was a period of (at least) six years (1846-52) during which Runcorn appears as a regular contributor, both congregationally and personally, to the Union's fund; and Mr. Jesson, its minister, was one of those who signed the "appeal" of June 1847. After the formation of the two district committees in 1848 he became the first secretary of the Southern Committee. Nothing is said of Runcorn in the Reports of 1842 and 1840; but in that of 1834 we read: "From Runcorn, which has received assistance from the Cheshire Union, no Report has been communicated." There is no earlier reference until we come to Mr. Evans's sermon in 1807.

It appears that Runcorn also went off the funds of the Lancashire Union in 1834.<sup>3</sup> It had, therefore, been in receipt of a "double benefit." At a later time, after the brief connection with Cheshire above mentioned, it again had recourse to Lancashire, and was aided from 1855 to 1861. As already said, its fluctuations ceased in 1885, when it joined Cheshire.

### Tattenhall.

The Rev. Job Wilson notes Tattenhall as one of the places in which he often preached after coming to Northwich in 1795.

<sup>1</sup> There were two pastors of this name—the other in 1832. A son of the first, Dr. John Robinson, still resides in Runcorn.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1890.

<sup>3</sup> Slate's "History of the Lancashire Union," p. 78.

It was one of the first places from which the newly formed Union heard the cry, "Come over and help us"; and, perhaps in partial response to this, William Silvester may sometimes have "come over" from Sandbach before the appointment of a local itinerant.<sup>1</sup> In 1810 the Union engaged the services of Mr. Thomas Hitchin, who "laboured abundantly" at Tattenhall and "in the neighbouring villages of Barton, Tilston, Bickerton and others." The first services had been held in a thatched cottage registered and fitted up for the purpose; but Mr. Hitchin came to a new chapel, built on land given by a gentleman of the village (Mr. Orton), and opened—in very bad weather—on October 19, 1808.<sup>2</sup> He had increasingly good congregations, and also a growing Sunday school, for which the people<sup>3</sup> "made a room at considerable expense."

Mr. Hitchin removed to Towcester in 1818, and was succeeded by a Rotherham student, Mr. John Morris, whose ordination took place on November 10, 1819, and his resignation in 1862—forty-three years later. The Rev. William Currie quickly took his place, and, as if by contrast, removed to Ireland before the April of 1864. But the same year saw the settlement of the Rev. A. C. Todd, who redressed the balance by continuing till 1890. In the 8th Report (1820) we are informed that "in connection with our former labours at Tattenhall a most gratifying event has taken place since the publication of the last Report. The church and congregation there have taken the support of the cause upon themselves without looking for further aid from the funds of the Union." In this state of independence they held on till 1880, when we come to this: "The secretary (of the District Committee) was instructed to forward a letter to Mr. Todd, of Tattenhall, expressive of their sympathy with him and the church in their present position, owing to the removal of a number of families from the neighbourhood." The case was aggravated by the financial effects of "severe agricultural depression," and by a debt of £400 "which had just been called in." Otherwise the church was found to be "in a healthy condition." Hence the Union considered it a case of exigency, and tried to meet it by a grant of £25—but recommending a strong and

<sup>1</sup> In 1808 the Committee were "making every inquiry in their power" for one. The story in Urwick, p. 105, that Mr. Silvester came with Job Wilson about 1795 is, of course, a mistake.

<sup>2</sup> Morning sermon by Mr. Evans; afternoon sermon by Mr. James, *then* of Boughton; evening sermon by Mr. Macdonald, of Market Drayton. Mr. Evans notes the bad weather (Report, 1811).

<sup>3</sup> Moreover, they purchased a house for the minister and his family, and showed them "uniform kindness" (Report, 1811).

immediate effort to raise the £400. Within a year the debt was reduced to £223, and within two years to £70. But the grant was not renewed after 1881, for reasons which satisfied the Executive Committee. In 1886 the District Committee, in response to Mr. Todd's application, agreed to recommend a further grant of £30—without success.

In 1890 Mr. Todd resigned, and while recommending a grant of £25, the District Committee nominated a number of its own members to act with the friends at Tattenhall "in the present emergency." The Union approved, and the result was that for some time the ministers of the Chester district gave "Sundays in rotation"—the Rev. F. Barnes co-operating "with the church in carrying out all necessary arrangements."

In September 1892 the church invited the Rev. G. H. Hancock, formerly of Staithes, Yorkshire, to the pastorate—the Union promising £40 towards his support on condition that the people augmented it to not less than £90, besides the manse. "The ecclesiastical plant in chapel and manse might well be the envy of many a church." Mr. Hancock settled in October, and "visitors" from the Union, who attended his recognition service on November 19th, "were favourably impressed with what they witnessed." The outlook seemed "hopeful." But "the heritage of past trouble" which lay below the smiling surface asserted itself, despite "a most conciliatory spirit"<sup>1</sup> on the part of the minister, and so the church is found again without a pastor at the end of March 1894. Hereupon the General Executive, in compliance with a requisition from the church and congregation,<sup>2</sup> placed the oversight of the church's affairs in the hands of a sub-committee of six, with the district secretary as convener. The main thing was to elect a "suitable pastor," and four months later the Committee were fortunate to induce the Rev. Joseph Oddy, who had retired "from active pastoral work,"<sup>3</sup> to "set aside his wish" for repose and put on harness again. His influence and efforts had done more than begin to be perceptibly beneficial in all respects,<sup>4</sup> when he suddenly passed away to higher service—March 1897—and the Executive was summoned to resume its charge. A special committee, "to inquire into the circumstances and prospects of this church," was appointed; but the church forestalled its action by inviting the Rev. J. W. Clark, late of Queen Street, Chester, to the pastorate. Mr. Clark

<sup>1</sup> Report—1893.

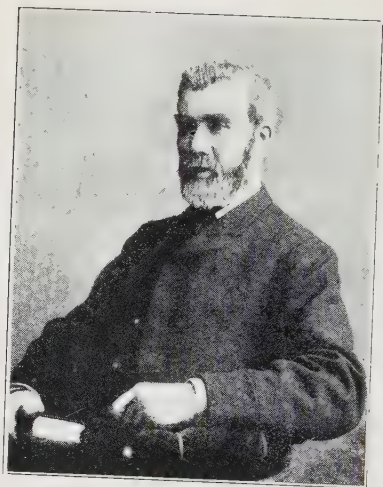
<sup>2</sup> Signed by eight members of the church and twenty-eight heads of families.

<sup>3</sup> At Tintwistle.

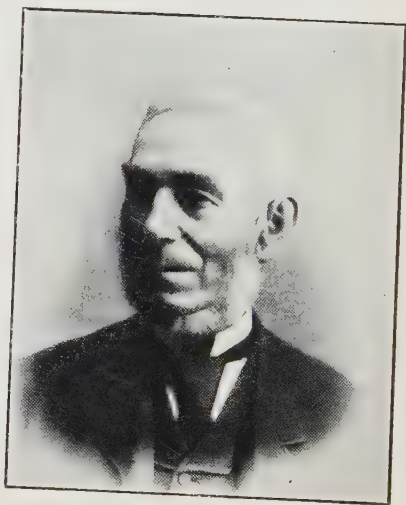
<sup>4</sup> Reports for 1896 and 1897.







Mr. THOMAS RIGBY.



Mr. THOMAS HUXLEY.

accepted and entered upon his duties in May; the Executive ultimately sanctioning the arrangement for one year. Mr. Clark's "tenure" lasted till March 1902, when serious illness compelled him to resign, and, on the whole, the church did well and prospered under his care.<sup>1</sup> In face of the new emergency the church appealed to the District Committee, which, after due inquiry and deliberation, consented to act with a sub-committee of the Executive towards another settlement. This willing but anxious service, prolonged for nearly two years,<sup>2</sup> led up to the appointment (in March 1904) by the Union, with the consent of the church, of the Rev. Eber Davies, late of the Penry Memorial Church, Sebastopol. The appointment has justified itself. "Under the pastorate of Mr. Davies," says the latest Report, "there is all-round improvement. The income has advanced, and the congregations are better, both on Sunday and the week-night. There are more scholars in the school and a larger attendance at the Band of Hope." Testimony is borne to the "tact and devotion" of the pastor; and although "the cause will still need all sympathy and help," there seems to be the decided beginning of better things. May the cheering forecast come true! But, whether it does or not, the case is one which well illustrates the wise, patient and generous care of the Union where a church from any cause has become "like a bruised reed or a smoking flax." It is not too much to say that but for such care Tattenhall would have died out, instead of being in a fair way to renew the vigour of its youth.

*Grants.*—1809-10, £45, 10s. (payment to Mr. Hitchin, and expenses of his removal). April 1815 to October 1816, £60 to Mr. Hitchin. 1880-82, £25. 1891, £25. 1892-93, £40. 1894-96, £50 (in hands of Special Committee). 1897, £40 (in hands of Executive Committee). 1898-1902, £35. 1903-5, £35 (£15 from special fund, with a minister). 1906 (£10 from special fund), £40.

### Frodsham.

The church here sprang out of the co-operation of two men in the same good work—one a Baptist, Mr. John Ockleston Jackson, of Runcorn, who resided at the Cedars, Sutton Weaver, and Mr. Thomas Rigby, who came to Frodsham in 1878 from Over, where he had been connected with the Congregational Church from his youth and a deacon under the Rev. John Marshall for upwards of thirty years. Mr. Rigby took "the

<sup>1</sup> See Reports.

<sup>2</sup> Its varied phases are vividly reflected in the "district minutes."

Mill" at Frodsham, and came to live there mainly to find work for his younger son, Mr. Arthur Rigby (now of Chester, though still a member of the Frodsham church), while an elder son carried on the business at Over. It was in the Mill Room that the movement began. Mr. Jackson, who had previously been superintendent of an important Wesleyan school, took up with great zeal the work of establishing a Sunday school, which speedily came to number 150 to 200 scholars. "He was a man of strong force of character, and a kindly, genial temperament which won the hearts and confidence of the young people; and continued superintendent for about ten years, when, owing to failing health, he had to give it up; and died in 1889, much lamented by all the Church."

Mr. Rigby, for his part, devoted himself to the work of gathering a congregation—to this end frequently conducting the services on the Sunday as well as the week evening service. In the early days he had not a few efficient helpers. Thus the Rev. John Yonge, of Warrington, preached the opening sermons in the Mill Room, and the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, Dr. Macfadyen, Dr. Mackennal, Dr. Maclaren, also the late Mr. John Rylands, and Mr. Samuel Rigby were all visitors at various times during the first year or two.

Under such favourable conditions the "cause" could hardly fail to make rapid headway. In 1879 a church was formed. In 1886 the congregation left the Mill for a new chapel, called "Union," to indicate the dual character of its origin and constitution by Baptists and Independents. In 1886 the church was admitted to the County Union, and by 1889 was strong enough to exchange supplies for a regular pastor. The first to settle was the Rev. J. Dyer Bray, a student from Rawdon College—hence a Baptist. He left in 1890, and was succeeded in 1892 by the Rev. C. Craddock, who left in the course of 1893. In 1894 the church found a third pastor in the Rev. A. H. Sayers, who remained till 1897 and then removed to Boston Spa.

In the same year Mr. Herbert Hooper, a non-collegiate student of Dr. Paton's, who had previously done good work as a temporary pastor at Sandbach, accepted the charge and held it till his removal to Townfield, Oldham, in 1902. At the outset of his work the shadow of an irreparable loss lay upon the church, for on March 2nd Mr. Rigby died suddenly, or rather "passed away in sleep." "What he did in the county and for the county on behalf of Christianity and Congregationalism will be known to most. The church at Frodsham is no mean memorial of his efforts. He was, too, a preacher whose services were in constant

requisition, so long as health permitted him to render them. In 1886 he was Chairman of the Union. He moved among many classes of people, but always with marked respect and honour. He was humble as a child, and as gentle and kind, but strong in faith and full of the spirit of his Lord." So the Report, in the words of one who knew him.

It was a direct consequence of this event, and "the removal from the neighbourhood of the bulk of the chief contributors" (also connected with the same event), that Frodsham had to seek the help of the Union in the following year. But, on the whole, its course has been onward and upward nevertheless. In 1899 it could report an evening congregation, which had increased threefold; in 1900 an addition of eleven new members to the church and a "people's monthly service" which filled the chapel; in 1901 "that congregations, church, and Sunday school are maintained, a Girls' Industrial Class and a Bible Class for men are well attended, tract distribution is vigorously prosecuted, and the debt of last year cleared off by a sale of work."

In 1901 we are admitted to a glimpse of the difficulties to be faced. "The chief losses are young men and women, who are drawn away by other and wealthier communities. It is deplorable that, in the name of Christian work, efforts should be made to rob one community for the aggrandisement of another. Persecution and bribery are clearly no monopoly of the irreligious." A similar complaint occurs in the Report for 1903,<sup>1</sup> but is more specific, declaring the measure of success attained to be all the more commendable considering "the great opposition from adherents of the Episcopal Church, many of the young people being spirited away from the Sunday school and the services by such inducements as money can provide."

In September 1903 Mr. Sidney Waterhouse, a student of the Lancashire College, entered upon the pastorate, and was ordained a few weeks later. He has been blessed, like his predecessor, with a small but most faithful group of workers<sup>2</sup> in church and school, and things have gone on prospering in his hands; so much so, that the place to-day is in a more healthy, united, and hopeful state than ever before.

*Grants.*—1898-1903, £20. 1904-6, £30.

*N.B.*—"The church continues a Union church, but it is understood that—seeing it receives aid from the (County) Union—the ministry shall be a Congregationalist. The deacons are elected for life, and may be Congrega-

<sup>1</sup> Repeated in 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Frequent reference is made to the ladies, who by their sewing-class have long met all the incidentals.

tionalist or Baptist. As a matter of fact, there is only one Baptist among them, and 'he is by no means strong as a Denominationalist.'"—*From Letter of T. A. RIGBY, Esq.*

#### HOLYWELL.\*

The Congregational church here dates from 1850. It makes its first appearance as a member of the Union in 1865. It was aided for the first time in 1869. The Rev. J. D. Riley was then the minister, having succeeded the Rev. H. J. West in 1868. Its claim to assistance is implied in the statement that the church "has many difficulties to contend with, being an English church in a Welsh town; and Mr. Riley conducts the only English services which are held in the place except those of the Established Church." It remained on the funds of the Union till 1878, when the Chester District Committee strongly recommended that Holywell, situated, as it is, so far from the borders of Cheshire, should be taken up by the North Wales English Association, to which it naturally belonged. The Union heartily agreed, considering the state of its treasury and the fact that the sister Association appeared not unwilling to take Holywell off its hands. So with a good word for Mr. Riley's excellent work and good hope for the church's future, further aid was withdrawn. But the church did not immediately withdraw itself from the Union. It appears among the churches of the Chester District for 1880, with the Rev. Owen Thomas, B.A., late of Lancashire College and the University of Cambridge, as minister. Its transfer, however, took place before the date of the next annual meeting, and two other Flintshire churches, Mold and Buckley, were transferred at the same time.

*Grants.*—1869, £50. 1870, £10. 1871-74, £20. 1875, £30 (provided minister receives stipend of £150). 1876-77, £20. 1878, £15.

#### MOLD.\*

The church here originated in 1858. In the year of its first grant from the Union (1870) the chapel is described as quite modern, capable of seating about 400 persons, but burdened with a debt of £700. In the same year the Rev. D. Burford Hooke took charge. Before his settlement it had become a question with some whether the church should not be closed; but "counsels of mercy prevailed" and were rewarded. "A minister was secured exactly adapted to the needs of the place—a minister," says the Report for 1880, "who has not only built up to strength and



independence the English church at Mold, but as secretary of the North Wales English Union has rendered a great service to Congregationalism throughout the Principality. Under Mr. Hooke's care the overwhelming debt was wiped off the chapel, the church and congregation were increased, a new manse and a new school were built, and Mold became a sort of centre for denominational action over all the surrounding districts."

*Grants.*—1870-71, £30. 1872, £40. 1873-74, £35. 1875-77, £45 (provided minister receives £150). 1878, £40. 1879, £35 or £40. 1880, became self-sustaining.

#### BUCKLEY.\*

Buckley was admitted to the Union in 1874. Its minister at the time was the Rev. T. D. Thomas, late of Bala College. The place is described as "a populous English-speaking village on the Welsh side of the Border, the inhabitants being chiefly employed in collieries and extensive manufactories of fire-bricks. In this important and growing district there has been a small Congregational church for many years.<sup>1</sup> A year or two ago the people ventured to build a handsome new chapel, the bricks being principally made by members of the congregation during leisure hours." The church prospered under Mr. Thomas. During 1875-76 a debt of £200 was paid off. In 1877 a new vestry was built, a new organ put in the chapel, the finances were reduced to a better system, and the congregations showed a marked improvement. So the Report of 1878, the last before the transfer of Buckley to the North Wales Association.

*Grants.*—1874, £20. 1875, £30 (on condition that the additional £10 go to increase stipend of minister to £120. 1876-77, £30 (if minister's stipend be £130).

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<sup>1</sup> Date of origin is 1792 according to the Congregational Year-Book, but 1800 according to the Cheshire Union Report of 1875.

## NANTWICH DISTRICT.<sup>1</sup>

### SECRETARY.

Rev. G. K. Walker . . . . . 1865-1882

## CREWE DISTRICT.

### SECRETARIES.

|                      |   |   |   |   |           |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Rev. G. K. Walker    | . | . | . | . | 1882-1890 |
| Rev. A. W. Potts     | . | . | . | . | 1890-1892 |
| Rev. G. G. Whitfield | . | . | . | . | 1892-1900 |
| Rev. R. Hughes       | . | . | . | . | 1900- —   |

### Alsager.

At the annual meeting of the Union, on April 27, 1870, "a letter was read from the secretary of the Staffordshire Union calling attention to the desirableness of an effort to introduce the preaching of the Gospel to Alsager and inviting co-operation in the matter. It was resolved that the sum of £20 be placed at the disposal of the Executive Committee for use of this place, to be expended under the direction of the District Committee."<sup>2</sup> What came of this does not appear; but in 1878 it is stated that "till last year there was no Congregational service in the place." Then, however, "mainly through the exertions of the late Mr. Maddock and his family, a site was obtained, and a neat school chapel erected, at a cost of £1400." Towards the close of the year (1877) steps were taken to clear off the debt of £700 still remaining, and were successful—owing to a contribution of £300 by Mr. Maddock, supplemented by £200 raised by Mr. Garlick, treasurer of the North Staffordshire Association, and £200 raised by the people themselves. Under these circumstances, and in view of the fact that the place was fast becoming "a favourite residence of gentlemen engaged in business in the Staffordshire pottery towns," the Union gladly voted a grant of £30.<sup>3</sup> With this assistance and another grant received from the

<sup>1</sup> In 1882 the name was changed to Crewe District.

<sup>2</sup> General Minute Book.

<sup>3</sup> This amount seems to have been given also in 1877 out of the £200 set aside for deserving cases.

North Staffordshire Union, the little church felt itself strong enough to engage a minister, and called the Rev. Thomas Davies, of Carmarthen—well known to many for his successful work at Runcorn.<sup>1</sup> In a year or so the Staffordshire grant was “dispensed with,” and hopes held out that the Cheshire grant would shortly be unneeded. But the erection of a new Established church (in 1881) and a continuance of bad trade in the Potteries were mentioned (in 1883) as drawbacks to the expected prosperity. And, while the influence of these did not abate, another was presently added in the removal of Mr. Davies to Barking.

The Rev. W. Attwood, of London, succeeded him in 1884, and found the “cause” very weak. Many families had left in consequence of the persistent bad trade; and it was realised, moreover, that “the religious accommodation in the village” was “greater than the demand.” The only visible item of encouragement at this time (1885) was the accession of Mr. Eaton, formerly of Crewe. In 1887 the state of things is reported as in nowise improved, and the Executive “is of opinion that the entire position at Alsager requires to be considered *ab initio*.” After the return of Mr. Attwood to London (before April 1888) it became worse; the number of worshippers was “very small”; and, as an interim arrangement, the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. D. Horne, of Alsager, and Mr. Kershaw, of Cobridge. “Worse still” is the Report of 1889—“a very marked drop” both in contributions and congregations”; “while the Sunday School has been entirely closed.” But a proposal is on foot to link the church “with Sandbach and Wheelock under one pastor,” and this may be the saving of it. Then, from 1890 onwards, there sounds a new and cheery note.

By consent of the three aforesaid churches the Executive, in June 1889, placed the Rev. J. Howard Fry at their head. Nine months later the churches were so well satisfied that they invited him themselves to remain as pastor. And as to Alsager one result had been that “the week-night service was now as well attended as the Sunday morning service was a year ago.” In 1893 its growing claims upon him are stated as the main reason for the re-adjustment by which Mr. Fry confined his labours to Alsager and Wheelock. The Report of 1894 says that “Alsager evidently needs and appreciates a more stated ministry.” Since Mr. Fry’s residence there, the congregations have increased 25 per cent. and the church membership as well. A Sunday school has been begun—with 5 teachers and 26 scholars, while “the contributions have gone

<sup>1</sup> “Till his health broke down” (Report of 1879).

up from £87 to £137." "Considerable progress" is the record for 1895. A year "rather of quiet perseverance than of marked progress" is the summary for 1896. At length in 1897, with the removal of Mr. Fry to Suffolk and the settlement of Mr. Robert Hughes (from Brecon College), the church attained its independence and entered upon a new period of hopeful endeavour—by no means falsified in the event.

*Grants.*—1870, £20 (towards Evangelistic efforts together with the Staffordshire Union). 1878, £30. 1879, £20 or £25. 1880, £25. 1881–83, £20. 1884–87, £35. 1888, £20. 1889, £120 (in conjunction with Sandbach and Wheelock). 1890, £125 (in conjunction with Sandbach and Wheelock). 1891, £100 (in conjunction with Sandbach and Wheelock). 1892, £85 (in conjunction with Sandbach and Wheelock). 1893–94, £60 (in conjunction with Wheelock). 1895–96, £45 (in conjunction with Wheelock).

### Crewe and Haslington.

Haslington, four miles south-west of Sandbach, was one of the first places (if not the first) "evangelised" by Mr. Silvester. His work began in 1807 and encountered much opposition. But by the date of the first Report (October 1808) this had subsided; "a large and attentive congregation" had been gathered, and also a Sunday school, "in which from eighty to ninety children of both sexes" were "taught to read and instructed in the principles of religion." The effect of this change is described in 1811<sup>1</sup> as very remarkable. "Once noted for profaneness, dissipation, and drunkenness," the place "seemed a spot devoid of the common civilities of life." The "entrance of the Gospel," however, has swept away these evils to such an extent that the "general appearance" of the village has been transformed.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Silvester found great joy in Haslington. Thus, in 1816,<sup>3</sup> he writes: "I cannot make mention of Haslington without feeling gratitude to God. This place has been my support amid all my trials." The little "neat chapel" was usually full, sometimes more than filled; continuous and numerous additions were made to the church; the Sunday school prospered under a sufficient supply of "diligent teachers"; and the people gave of their means with generous ardour.<sup>4</sup> Such, on the whole, seems to have been the state of things so long as Mr. Silvester had the

<sup>1</sup> 3rd Report.

<sup>2</sup> When a church was formed, the father and mother of the present Mr. Postock were among the members.

<sup>3</sup> 7th Report.

<sup>4</sup> Thus in 1822 they are said to have contributed £50 towards the debt upon the chapel.

oversight. He died in September 1846; and the next mention of Haslington occurs in 1850, when it appears in connection with Crewe, the two places sharing the services of one evangelist—Mr. Bingley.

The work at Crewe was started in 1841, when the Union applied a part of the £200 which was about to be repaid to it by Middlewich to the purchase of land for a place of worship. "The rapidly increasing character and central position of" Crewe made this step seem advisable.

Seven years later<sup>1</sup> the cause there is reported as weak and not advancing, though there is a good Sunday school. The urgent need is the "formation of a church and a settled ministry." It was to meet this need that the Union effected the arrangement by which Crewe and Haslington became associated in church fellowship and also in financial effort.

The joint pastor, Mr. Bingley, late of Middlesboro'-on-Tees, took charge in January 1850. The two places co-operated harmoniously, and there was a considerable increase of income;<sup>2</sup> but, weighing up gains with losses, the numerical situation in school and church remained much the same. Mr. Bingley left some time in 1851, and was succeeded in September by "our brother, John Comper Gray," with a resulting improvement all round, particularly, so far as Crewe was concerned, in the matter of giving.<sup>3</sup> The date of the next Report is 1857. By this time Mr. Gray has given place to Mr. Hemming, under whose "energetic labours" Crewe, at least, has reached a state very encouraging to the Union, which deplores the prospect of losing him in July. "He will leave precious memories behind him." After his departure the two churches went on for three years without a pastor—not from lack of desire to obtain one, but from lack of unanimity. They both suffered in consequence, and Crewe from the additional cause that the London and North-Western Railway "changed the place of its coach-works," and so withdrew from the little congregation "six families."<sup>4</sup>

In the end they agreed to refer the choice of a pastor to the Union, who at once appointed a sub-committee for the purpose. This committee, after supplying the two pulpits for some months, effected "the settlement among them of the Rev. Thomas Davison, formerly of Stockton-on-Tees."<sup>5</sup> Mr. Davison remained about five years, and several tokens of success are recorded—again at

<sup>1</sup> Report for 1849.

<sup>2</sup> £50, 15s. in 1850, £65, 11s. in 1851, from the two.

<sup>3</sup> It had raised £68, 19s. 5d. in the year 1851-52, and was laying itself out to clear the chapel of its debt of £220.

<sup>4</sup> Report of 1860.

<sup>5</sup> Report of 1861.



Crewe most of all.<sup>1</sup> But when the Rev. J. J. Thornton settled in 1866, the net result of all previous efforts appeared to be a "stationary" condition in both places, though less so at Crewe. Hereupon the District Committee recommended their severance, on the ground that Crewe alone was sufficient for one man, and advised the conjunction of Haslington with Wheelock under an evangelist. The annual meeting, overruling the Executive, approved this step, and the severance took place, but not, at once, the "conjunction." Wheelock for a time was united with the Staffordshire Itinerant Association, while Haslington made a new and promising start under the care of Mr. B. S. Bostock.<sup>2</sup>

As to Crewe, its "independent" progress at first was checked by Mr. Thornton's resignation, through ill health, in the same year as his settlement. Then, in 1868, came the beginning of the Rev. W. A. Blake's ministry. Soon the chapel became too small, and the Town Hall was engaged. Before April 1869<sup>3</sup> the membership had gone up to 99; the Sunday school to 220, with 23 teachers; the Town Hall evening congregation to 250; and "strenuous efforts" were already being directed towards a new place of worship. On February 9, 1870, "the new and handsome chapel,"<sup>4</sup> which "crowned" these efforts, was opened free of debt, save for £90. Above all, though much exhausted by the great strain thus put upon it, the church made up its mind to become henceforth self-supporting—a resolution joyfully welcomed by the Union, the more so on account of the "burdened state of its funds."

Mr. Blake removed to the Tabernacle, Stockport, in 1873, and did eminently good work alike there and elsewhere; but he never did better work than at Crewe, which to this day gratefully owns its indebtedness to him.

The following are the ministers of Crewe since Mr. Blake: the Rev. A. W. Potts, of Spring Hill College, from 1873 to 1892—a man "sterling and strong," called away home "in the prime of his days, and the abounding usefulness of his manifold ministry;"<sup>5</sup> the Rev. A. E. Hawes, of Wellingboro', from 1893 to 1901; the Rev. Herbert Cooper, from 1902.

As regards Haslington and Wheelock the connection of the latter with Staffordshire was but temporary, and in 1868 the two places are reported as working together. Mr. Buddell became

<sup>1</sup> The bright spot at both places is said to be the Sunday school (Report for 1864).

<sup>2</sup> At this date (1861) Haslington had a morning congregation of 20 and an afternoon of from 40 to 50; a Sunday school of 4 teachers and 25 scholars, and a church membership of 11.

<sup>3</sup> Report.

<sup>4</sup> Costing £2600.

<sup>5</sup> Report for 1893.

the common evangelist and his labours were "blessed" to both. In 1870 Wheelock, though outwardly much the same, is reported as more evidently devout—even the young people manifesting "great attention in religious worship"; while at Haslington the spiritual prosperity has shown itself in a successful effort to improve "chapel and school accommodation." Things went on well for some years longer. Then in 1875 the Union found it necessary to withdraw the grant owing to "disaffection" at Haslington and in the hope that Mr. Buddell would then be led to seek another charge—though full of sympathy with him personally. Mr. Buddell removed to Essex within six months and the grant was conditionally renewed.<sup>1</sup> His place was taken by Rev. L. Crookall, of Airedale College. In 1879, however, he also resigned, finding the stipend too small and the worry of maintaining "an artificial connection" between the two churches too great. He was the last who undertook the task. Wheelock (as is shown in another place) entered into other connections, but Haslington decided to keep to itself. Provision for the services was left with Mr. B. S. Bostock, who has borne the responsibility ever since.<sup>2</sup> In 1879 the Union voted £10 as a sort of parting gift to Haslington and would have liked to do more "for auld lang syne." Its claims, however, do not admit of indulging in sentiment; and "we are also of opinion," concludes the Report, "that a short time left to their own resources might prove a very real good to Haslington." In point of fact nothing further has since been given or asked.

*Grants*:—When two amounts are named the larger means "with minister."

|                     |              |  |                       |          |
|---------------------|--------------|--|-----------------------|----------|
| Crewe .. .. 1846-48 | £10          | Crewe and                                | 1860                  | { £60 or |
|                     | (Per annum.) | Haslington ..                            |                       | { £20    |
| Crewe and           | 1849         | (If Churches raise £40 towards stipend.) |                       |          |
| Haslington          | { £50 or     |  |                       |          |
| "                   | { £30        | "  | 1861-63               | £50      |
| "                   | £50          | "  | 1864                  | £50      |
| "                   | { £50 or     | (If Crewe alone raise £50 for stipend.)  |                       |          |
| "                   | { £25        |  |                       |          |
| "                   | £50          | "  | 1865                  | { £50 or |
| "                   | 1852-53      |  |                       | { £40    |
| "                   | { £40 or     | Crewe ..                                 | 1866                  | £50 }    |
| "                   | { £20        | Haslington ..                            | 1866                  | £25 }    |
| "                   | £50          | Crewe ..                                 | 1867                  | £30      |
| "                   | { £40 or     | Haslington ..                            | no grant applied for. |          |
| "                   | { £20        | Crewe ..                                 | 1868                  | £30      |
| "                   | 1856-58      | Haslington & }                           | 1868                  | £30      |
| "                   | { £50 or     | Wheelock }                               |                       |          |
| "                   | { £20        |  |                       |          |

<sup>1</sup> Report, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> He and his father between them have completed 100 years' service at Haslington.

|                   |           |       |                                    |           |       |
|-------------------|-----------|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Crewe ..          | 1869      | £60   | Haslington ..                      | } 1876-78 | { £20 |
| Haslington ..     | 1869      | £20   | Wheelock ..                        |           |       |
| Wheelock ..       | 1869      | £20   | Haslington ..                      | 1879      | £10   |
| Haslington & ..   | 1870-71   | £40   | Wheelock ..                        | 1879      | £10   |
| Wheelock ..       |           |       | (Or £15 with Minister.)            |           |       |
| Haslington ..     | } 1872-74 | { £20 | Haslington ..                      | } 1880    | { £10 |
| Wheelock ..       |           |       | { £25                              |           |       |
| Haslington ..     | } 1875    | { £10 | Wheelock ..                        | 1881      | £15   |
| Wheelock ..       |           |       | { £12, 10s.                        | " ..      | 1882  |
| (For six months.) |           |       | (See under Sandbach and Wheelock.) |           |       |

In 1877 the Union granted £50 in aid of "a new mission" opened in Crewe in a commodious and central building, rented and fitted up as a school and preaching-room. Mr. D'Ewart, late Scripture reader at Denton, was appointed to take charge. In 1878 the Union felt justified in raising the grant to £100. Mr. D'Ewart turned out a disappointment; and Mr. Moon, of the Manchester mission, took his place, but "in a much better room." He removed to Nantwich in January 1880. The mission was then placed under the management of a committee, appointed by the church at High Town, and the grant reduced from £100 to £30—for supplies. This amount was granted again in 1881; but in 1882 the grant was £5 less and was the last—a deputation from the Executive having recommended that the mission be abandoned, and "friends on the spot" having accepted an offer "for the room and furniture" from the Wesleyans.

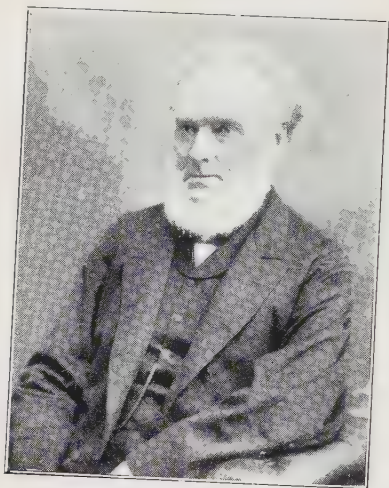
### Middlewich.

Puritanism had here a worthy representative during the first half of the seventeenth century in the Rev. Thomas Langley, minister of the parish from 1609 till his death in 1657. His successor, the Rev. Richard Bowker, also appears to have been a Nonconformist, though his name is not among the "2000." After him the Nonconformists built a meeting-house of their own and had for minister Adam Holland, M.D., who was ordained at Knutsford on September 27, 1692, and remained till his acceptance of "a call to Macclesfield in 1702." His place was taken for two or three years by Mr. Kirby, a hopeful young man, bred up in academic learning under Mr. Chorlton, of Manchester; then, for a few months by Mr. Sidebotham of Wheelock: then, for several years, by Mr. Nathaniel Twemlow; then, by a succession of men who are little more than names, until the last is reached in the Rev. John Phillips, minister of a chapel at Kingsley, and, apparently, a Unitarian, of whom we read in 1825 that "in order to entitle the late Rev. John Phillips . . . to the endowment or funds for preaching at Middlewich, it became necessary to hire a congregation of a few persons to attend at the rate of eightpence per diem. Since his death the chapel has been converted into cottages."<sup>1</sup>

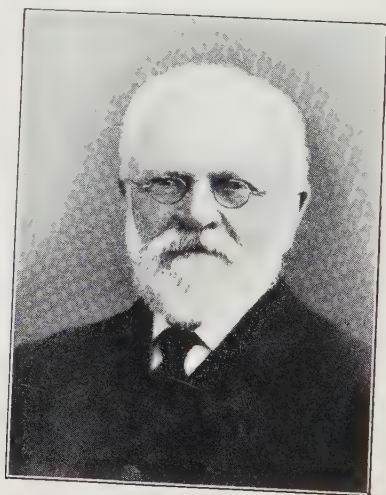
Thus an "originally orthodox" church went the way of too many others, and a new start had to be made. This was done

<sup>1</sup> "The Manchester Socinian Controversy (1825)," p. 123.





Mr. R. DUTTON, Sen



Rev. F. CARTER  
(General Secretary).



in 1789 by the preaching of the Rev. William Maurice, of Stockport, in a registered house. Ministers from Congleton, Hanley, Drayton, Delph, Stockport, and Northwich carried on services in the same place for three years. Then a small chapel was fitted up, and opened in December 1792, the Rev. Mr. Boden, of Hanley, and Captain Scott, then of Drayton, being the preachers. Here "regular Sabbath evening services were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Jarvis, of Northwich; and—after his settlement in June 1795—by the Rev. Job Wilson, who kept up the practice of his predecessor "until 17th July 1808." Then, no doubt at Mr. Wilson's entreaty, the Middlewich church<sup>1</sup> became the centre of operations for an itinerant of the newly-formed County Union—viz., Mr. Robert Niel, late of Idle Academy.

From the early Reports it is evident that his work was hard enough at first. Middlewich is a "barren spot."<sup>2</sup> But by 1813 "land had been purchased for the building of a new chapel in a more eligible situation," and several friends of the Union had subscribed generously. The chapel was built, and in July 1814 Mr. Niel could report that since the opening of it "the number of hearers is greatly increased" and a Sunday school has been opened. Mr. Niel left before the issue of the next Report in November 1816;<sup>3</sup> and between this date and 1820 the place suffered from the lack of a "stated labourer"—Mr. Capps, the second itinerant, making but a brief stay.

In 1820, however, the Union engaged the Rev. J. Robinson, of Rotherham Academy, and the work revived, especially among the young. "The Sunday school," says the Report of 1822, "has been peculiarly prosperous." There are 308 scholars, and one pleasing feature is the eagerness of both parents and children "to procure by their little savings religious tracts, hymn-books, and even Bibles." Mr. Robinson, by his ordination in September 1821, became recognised as minister of the church (instead of evangelist), and continued in that capacity till December 1825. One may fairly call him the first minister of the church; the second was the Rev. John Raines, formerly of Bolsover. He stayed eighteen months, and was followed by the Rev. Joseph Evans, of Flockton in Yorkshire, who took charge in October 1827 and stayed four years. His Report for April 1829 was the last that appeared. "Since writing the above," runs the editor's note, "the friends at Middlewich have signified their intention of declining any further aid from the Union. They expressed

<sup>1</sup> A Congregational church had been formed by Rev. John Meldrum, of Hatherlow, in 1797.

<sup>2</sup> Report, 1811.

<sup>3</sup> Here it is noted as the most important station of the Union.

their gratitude for the assistance hitherto afforded, and intimated their purpose of co-operating cheerfully with the Union, in the furtherance of its general objects." Throughout the period of its dependence, Middlewich was, it would seem, regarded as an "itinerary," *i.e.* its ministry, &c., was supported out of the Union funds, the church returning what it could "collect." There are very considerable gaps, but, so far as the statements of account are printed, they showed that up to 1828 the place received £800 (at least). Up to 1841, moreover, the Union continued to pay the interest on the chapel, £10<sup>1</sup> annually. The church, therefore, owed much to the Union and did not forget the fact. Thus its annual contributions for the next twenty years (1828–48) averaged quite £12, and the Report for 1842 has the following: "The church and congregation at Middlewich have exerted themselves to pay off the debt upon their chapel. Arrangements are now in progress—the amount having been already received, and it is hoped that the sum of £200, lent for that purpose, will be speedily placed at the service of the Union." In addition, then, to paying the interest on the chapel debt, the Union had lent the church £200—interest free, no doubt. This was now repaid (1842), and was used for starting the cause at Crewe. The Report concludes: "It is a circumstance well adapted to encourage perseverance that the cause at Middlewich, so long aided by the Union in the days of its feebleness, should now be so prosperous as to relieve itself from all pecuniary obligation to the Union, and so far leave it at liberty" for other "works of faith and labours of love."

The ministerial succession since Mr. Evans has been the following:—Rev. William Chambers, June 1832 to March 1837<sup>2</sup>; Rev. James Cooper (the only Middlewich minister "who has ventured into the domains of authorship"), August 1837 to July 1848; Rev. John Robinson (a student from Airedale), 1845 to December 1856; Rev. W. B. MacWilliam, October 1857 to 1863; Rev. G. K. Walker, 1866 to 1890<sup>3</sup>; Rev. J. W. Fortnam, 1891.

It was Mr. MacWilliam who made the remark about Mr. Cooper in his story<sup>4</sup> of the church up to 1863. That was the jubilee year of the chapel in Queen Street. It had undergone many alterations, all for the better; commodious school-rooms

<sup>1</sup> So in the three Reports 1834, 1839, 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Died at Altrincham, August 4, 1894, aged eighty-eight. He was minister in Newcastle-under-Lyne for thirty-three years.

<sup>3</sup> "A more faithful worker never served within our borders" (Report for 1897–98, the year after his death).

<sup>4</sup> One of the best written in Urwick's book, pp. 163–175.

had been purchased four years before, and "together with the old rooms" gave good accommodation for between 200 and 300 Sunday-school scholars; and (best sign of all in Mr. MacWilliam's eyes) "for four years pew-rents have been abolished in the Independent Chapel in Middlewich, and whoever will may enter wherever there is room, and worship and learn without money and without price."

The old chapel was replaced by the present in 1870, and here in 1874 the Union held its annual meetings, under the presidency of Mr. Richard Dutton, the oldest deacon of the church, the Union's treasurer for twenty years, and always its "invaluable" friend. In his address from the chair he bore generous testimony to what had been done for the church by the Union in days gone by: "Congregationalism in this town owes much to the Cheshire Union; humanly speaking, we might never have had an existence as a religious body but for the timely and generous aid rendered by this Association." He also singled out for special emphasis the ministry of the first John Robinson, the Rotherham student whom the Union had been instrumental in bringing to the town "somewhere about fifty-four years ago."<sup>1</sup> "The influence of his preaching, combined with a fine manly exhibition of Christian consistency, gave to Nonconformity a standing in this old town which has never been lost." Such words from such a man deserve to be recorded. Mr. Dutton himself added not a little to the influence of Nonconformity in Middlewich, and must have been a tower of strength to the local church. What he was to the churches generally found expression in 1872, when he resigned the office of treasurer. "In accepting Mr. Dutton's resignation the members of the Union desire to express their high appreciation of the services which for nearly twenty years he has rendered the Union. The confidence reposed in him by the churches and by all classes of the community, his fidelity to the principles of Congregationalism, and the energy, exactness, and courtesy shown by him in discharging the duties of treasurer, have rendered his services to the Union invaluable." Mr. Dutton died in April 1880. It may be added here that his son—also a Richard—followed closely in the father's footsteps. His work was associated chiefly with the church at Lymm, to which he was of the greatest help in all ways, and he served the Bowdon district as secretary for eleven years. But, like his father, he served the churches generally, not only by holding the same office of treasurer, but also by the width of his sympathy and liberality.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robinson was then (1874) and had been for many years one of the secretaries of the London City Mission (*vide* Address).

In 1890 he was elected chairman; and, though he left the county in 1892, he was by no means forgotten, and when he died in 1896 there were many who could echo the secretary's words as none too strong: "In the best and truest sense he was a Christian gentleman, and the memory of him will always be fragrant."

Mr. Fortnum enables me to add to the facts already stated that new school premises were built in 1881, a new organ in 1892, and a young men's institute in 1906.

*Grants.*—1809: April 6, Expenses of removing Mr. Niel's goods, £3, 6s. 2d. Sept. 6, Mr. Niel's salary for two years, £140; Donation to Mr. Niel for his labours, £10.

April 1815 to Oct. 1816, Mr. Capps, £90, 5s.; supplies, &c., at Middlewich, and interest of debt on chapel, £154, 9s. 2d.; Mr. Jackson, St. Helen's, for preparing trust-deed for Middlewich Chapel, £18.

Sept. 1819 to Sept. 1820, Itinerant, £60; interest on Middlewich Chapel, £20;<sup>1</sup> Trust-deed for Middlewich Chapel, £24, 6s. 11d.

1820–21, Itinerants' salary, £60; interest on chapel, £20.

1821–22, Interest on chapel, £20; Itinerants' salary, £60.

1827–28, Itinerants' salary, £60; interest on chapel, £14.<sup>2</sup>

### Nantwich.

A full account of the ecclesiastical (Puritan) succession at the chapelry of Nantwich and at Acton—the parish church down to the close of the seventeenth century—is given in Urwick's "Nonconformity in Cheshire," and there is no call to repeat it. As to the former, however,—the "chapelry"—we may mention that the incumbent during the Commonwealth was Richard Jackson, a Presbyterian, who conformed in 1662 and retained office till his death in 1677. There is no evidence to show where the Nonconformists worshipped in the dark years immediately following the Uniformity Act, but that they existed is proved by their publicly meeting for worship, under James the Second's Indulgence, in 1687. The Rev. William Turton, M.A., ejected in 1662 from Rowley, in Staffordshire, is mentioned as a frequent preacher. Another occasional preacher, of more note, was the Rev. Matthew Henry, in his young days. But the first pastor of the congregation was Samuel Laurence—one of Matthew Henry's fastest friends—who signed, on the same date with him, the agreement of the Cheshire ministers in 1691, and regularly attended the meetings of the classis till his death in 1712. He was succeeded very shortly after by the Rev. Joseph Mottershead,

<sup>1</sup> The entry is £27, 15s. for interest on Middlewich and Haslington Chapel, but that on the latter is given as £6, 18s. 6d. in 1815–16.

<sup>2</sup> The total interest on the two chapels was now £21, 15s.



also a friend of Matthew Henry's, who died in his house on June 22, 1714. The congregation about that time is given as 300, and is already counted among those of a Socinian tendency in Cheshire.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mottershead removed to Manchester in 1717, and from 1718 to 1728 the Rev. William Vaudrey was minister, a new chapel being built for him in 1719. Upon his removal to Bristol the Rev. Thomas Haines became pastor and remained till 1745. His successor, the Rev. Richard Meanley, was the occasion of the last entry in the minutes of the "Cheshire classis," and it has been plausibly conjectured that the subject of his ordination, to which the entry referred, may have defined "a contrariety of creed" so acute as to break up the Union. At any rate, the ministers of the place after Mr. Meanley, beginning with the celebrated Dr. Joseph Priestley (1758-61), have all been Socinian or Unitarian; and so the "orthodox" Nonconformists had to start afresh on their own account. This was done about the year 1778—so far as those inclined to Independency were concerned. The pioneers were Mr. Henry Hitchen, a joiner, and a companion of his, Mr. John Smith, a shoemaker. The story of their first venture, told by Mr. Hitchen's son,<sup>2</sup> is too interesting to omit. Their concern was to find a place for worship. At last they fixed on "a large painter's shop"—belonging to a Quaker, Mr. Tunstall. But "as they approached the door" to make inquiries, Mr. Hitchen's heart began to misgive him. Suppose they should hire the room, and, being poor men, not be able to pay the rent or support the place? "They wandered up Shrewbridge Lane, talking the matter over." Courage returned—the courage of faith. They "knocked at the door." The Quaker received them kindly, listened with sympathy to "their desire," let them have the room "on very low terms," and gave permission "to make any alterations they liked." Mr. Hitchen at once set to work, and soon had the room "fitted up" by his own hands. "It had only two pews and pulpit." But besides the pews there were forms, and "part of the floor was taken up and used as a gallery." Then the good man went over to Wollerton or Market Drayton, where Captain Scott was then residing, and invited him to open the little place. He did so in 1780, and often, with other neighbouring ministers,<sup>3</sup> took the services. "Whenever they were dissatisfied of a minister," Mr. Hitchen or Mr. Smith "read a sermon." For

<sup>1</sup> Evans MS., 1717-1729.

<sup>2</sup> In a MS. found among the papers of the late Mr. Urwick.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Job Wilson, Mr. Armitage of Chester, Mr. Welsh, Mr. Boden, late of Sheffield, are mentioned. Mr. Armitage took part in the "opening."



several years the two between them—Mr. Hitchen mainly—supported the cause,<sup>1</sup> and, when this became too great a burden, it was taken off their hands by Mrs. Barrow, wife of Squire Barrow. Connected with the Squire is a story that on one occasion “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort,” who had ill-treated Mr. Hitchen and his friends, were summoned before him and ordered “either to be led through the town by a rope or to make public apology in the chapel. They chose the latter.” After the Squire’s death his widow married Captain Scott, and about the same time (1802) she built the chapel in Church Lane which took the place of the “shop” in Queen Street. “At first it was very small, the gallery being added afterwards.” So far the narrative by Mr. Hitchen’s son. As to the pastors of the Nantwich church, it appears that, after an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Squire Barrow to secure Job Wilson, a Mr. Gardner was the first to settle. He remained two years (1796–98) and was followed in 1799 by the Rev. William Jones, who left in 1800. Rev. John Tisier came next, in the latter end of 1800—“sent by the managers of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Chapels”—and held charge till 1804. The fourth was a student of Wrexham Academy, Mr. John James, whose stay extended from 1804 to 1807, and whose duties were lightened by the assistance of Captain Scott, who, after his marriage with widow Barrow, came to reside in Nantwich, preaching here and alternately to the Nonconformists at Matlock.<sup>2</sup> Mr. James was succeeded by the Rev. Robert Smith, of Leek, who resigned on 10th January 1818. Since then the successive ministers have been the following:—the Rev. Peter Henshall, who came September 1818 and left March 20, 1825 (in his time the chapel was enlarged); Mr. Senior, who came July 16, 1825, and left November 12, 1832; Mr. Bury, who came January 20, 1834, and left March 25, 1835; Mr. M’Clean, who came September 8, 1835, and left June 25, 1840 (“He was a very popular preacher, and attracted great numbers to the chapel. During his time the chapel was pewed”); Mr. Simson, who came November 23, 1840, and left June 24, 1851<sup>3</sup> (In the second year of his ministry, 1842, a new chapel, costing £2200, was erected); Mr. Sadler, who came February 1, 1852, and left<sup>4</sup> April 1, 1855; Rev. E. L. Adams, who came August 3, 1856, and left in 1865; the Rev. R. S. Lewis, who came in 1866 and left in 1869; the Rev. H.

<sup>1</sup> “They had no collections,” it is added.

<sup>2</sup> He died in May 1807.

<sup>3</sup> He removed to Stretford, near Manchester.

<sup>4</sup> For Nuneaton.

S. Payne, who came from Moulton at the end of 1873 and left in 1879; the Rev. F. Moon, who came from Crewe in 1880 and left (for the United States) in 1887; the Rev. W. J. S. Davis, who came from St. Anne's Wells Road, Nottingham, in 1888 and left for Wincanton in 1904; the Rev. J. Vivian Davies, who came from Castle Farm and Cromwell's Hill (Caergwrle) in 1905, and is the present minister.

Nantwich, through all the ups and downs of its 150 years of life, has been self-sustaining—with one brief exception. In 1888 we read: "For very many years the church at Nantwich has been in a very weak state, and now feel constrained to seek the advice and help of the Union in order to retrieve its position." The Union at once nominated a sub-committee to confer with the Nantwich friends; with whose consent the committee undertook to arrange for the supply of the pulpit by ministers of the county for three months, and a grant was voted at the rate of £60 with a minister, or of £30 without. But after receiving three quarters' grant at the latter rate, the church, in November 1888, invited Mr. Davis (the Union cordially approving) and at once declared itself self-sustaining.

*Grant.*—1888, £22, 10s. (three quarters).

### Over and Minshull.

These two places, situated about five miles from each other, have been worked together under one pastor<sup>1</sup> since 1834. Moreover, the work began in each about the same time. Taking Minshull first, the story leads us back to "an old farmhouse called Minshull Hill" where, in the spring of 1806, "two brothers of the name of Jackson" came to reside. They came from Cuddington, near Tattenhall, and had been members of the little Independent church at the latter village. For their own sake, and for the sake of the spiritually destitute around them in the Minshull neighbourhood, they were moved to (license and) open their spacious kitchen for a weekly service on Wednesday evenings. It was easy to enlist the sympathy of a man like Job Wilson, who came over from Northwich to conduct the

<sup>1</sup> Beyond a common pastorate the two places are and always have been distinctly separate churches.

first service "in the month of June"; and Mr. Silvester (after his settlement at Sandbach in 1807) with other ministers were no less ready to help. At the end of two years the services were extended to Sundays as well, the brothers officiating themselves when other supplies failed. Soon, also, the kitchen—becoming too small—gave place to a barn; and this again "in two years more" to a chapel built with materials all of which were carted "free of cost by the neighbouring farmers." It was opened on April 10, 1810, Mr. Sheem, of Liverpool, preaching in the afternoon and Mr. Evans, of Stockport, in the evening. The keen interest of the Union in this movement is evident from the first. Minshull is one of the three places mentioned by Mr. Evans in the sermon he preached before the Cheshire Association at Northwich—the first annual sermon—on September 17, 1807. He mentions it as having applied for (ministerial) aid, and as having "contributed very handsomely<sup>1</sup> towards our fund." In his first Report of the Union he says: "At Minshull Hill the number of hearers is very considerable, and among them we hope there are several who have given, and still continue to give pleasing proofs of the efficacy of the Gospel." In his second "our brother Niel, with his brother itinerant, Silvester, visits Minshull, where the Lord appears to do great things for many souls: a great degree of devotedness to the Lord's work appears in several of our dear friends in this place." In his third, again: "This has been from the first a station of great importance. The work has been attended with very pleasing and visible effects. There is a comfortable chapel now erected, a church formed,<sup>2</sup> increasing in numbers, and a very considerable field, for further labours and exertions, opening on all sides. And what is of still greater importance here, our valued Christian friends are, in a most exemplary manner, laying out their property, influence, time, and talents in the furthering of the Gospel. . . . Here also is just commenced a Sunday school, which, under the watchful superintendence of a valuable friend, promises, with the divine blessing, to be of very extensive utility."<sup>3</sup> Passing to the Report of 1816 we find that the congregations at Minshull have "lately much increased, both on the Lord's Day and week nights," and that the services are sustained by Mr. Silvester, Mr. Capps, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. W. Hitchen, especially by the last. "This place is regularly supplied on the Sabbath Day by Mr. W. Hitchen, whose modest, intelligent, and gratuitous services have eminently

October  
1808.

November  
1809.

October  
1811.

<sup>1</sup> £16, 5s. 7d.

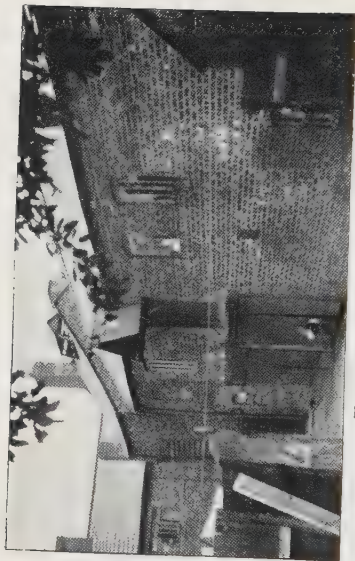
<sup>2</sup> It consisted of 11 members. and was in connection with Middlewich.

<sup>3</sup> Soon had nearly 100 scholars.





COTTAGE AT OVER.



THE COTTON ROOM, OVER.



OLD CHAPEL, OVER.



MINSHULL CHAPEL.



contributed to promote the interest of religion in this village.”<sup>1</sup> It is added as a “pleasing” fact that “a Methodist place of worship lately opened in this neighbourhood, so far from having injured this congregation, has increased it.” In 1820 and 1822 the Reports intimate that, though still visited occasionally by Mr. Silvester, the place is served chiefly by the minister of Middlewich, Mr. Robinson—always, of course, in conjunction with Mr. Hitchen. After October 1827 Mr. Evans, a successor to Mr. Robinson, joined Mr. Hitchen in the work; and the Report of 1829 shows another worker in the Rev. John Marshall of Over. Then, with the death of Mr. Hitchen in May 1832 and the physical inability of the new minister of Middlewich, Mr. Chambers, to continue for long the service of both places Mr. Marshall made himself responsible for Minshull, and united it with his pastorate at Over.<sup>2</sup> This took place towards the end of 1834.

As to Over, it was the Rev. Job Wilson who sowed the first seeds of a church here when in 1805 he began to hold services “in a registered house” of the village. These had to be given up when the house was sold. But in 1808 Mr. Niel, the itinerant stationed at Middlewich, came in search of another opening and found one. A room was hired which had been used by weavers, called the “cotton room.” Week by week for several years Mr. Niel traversed the five miles to and from Over, often accompanied by willing helpers from the Middlewich church; while, says the Report of 1811, “several of our respected friends from Minshull assist the itinerant in this place by keeping prayer-meetings, reading sermons, or delivering exhortations.” In 1813 the “cotton room” was required by its owners for some other purpose and the loss turned to gain in the determination to build a chapel, opened on October 26, 1815.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile we glean from the 4th Report (January 1813) that the congregation is “one of the most considerable in number of all the new places,” and that a school of 200 has been gathered; and, from the 5th (July 1814) that the “promising additions which have been made to the church at Middlewich by persons from Over,” as well as “the earnest anxiety of the people for the erection of a chapel, give encouraging hopes that much good is to be done in this quarter.” What is said here about the Middlewich church being recruited from Over implies that, so far, Over had no

<sup>1</sup> He rendered this gratuitous service for more than twenty years. His death occurred on May 3, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> It has always been a separate church, or two churches calling one man.

<sup>3</sup> With a debt of £700, despite all exertions.

church of its own. But about this time (1814-16) a church was formed by Rev. Job Wilson—though this fact is not mentioned in the Report.<sup>1</sup>

In 1819 the Rev. Nathanael Scholefield became the first pastor,<sup>2</sup> with the Union's consent and "as liberal a portion of pecuniary assistance as the funds would permit." His success was remarkable, and inspired the most lively hopes; but in July 1820 he died suddenly, and "by this stroke the plans which he and our brethren there had formed are all entirely deranged." In the ensuing November, however, the church, acting "by the advice of some esteemed friends connected with the Union, invited Mr. J. Marshall to labour amongst them;"<sup>3</sup> and it was soon realised how a seeming evil may lead to manifold good. Larger and more regular congregations, "including many who come from a considerable distance"; prayer-meetings attended by not less than sixty persons; social meetings of the people to further, in various ways, each other's welfare; the Sunday school growing in numbers and quality of service—such is the Report at the end of two years.<sup>4</sup> It is added that Mr. Marshall has also directed his attention to the workhouse at Over, where he goes to pray and expound the Scriptures with old and young. Assisted, moreover, by the earnest exertions of "an esteemed friend, Mr. W. Jackson," of Minshull, he has wakened up both this place and Calveley. In fact, we are at the beginning of one of the most truly apostolic ministries in the county. The clearance of debt from the chapel, the enlargement of the chapel, the erection of new Sunday schools and of a commodious house for the minister, and finally the building of a "beautiful new sanctuary"—opened free of debt early in 1868—these were but the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual prosperity of which he was the (human) heart and soul. There is no space here for an adequate account of such a ministry, but some sentences from the Report of 1876 may be quoted: "Another change of deep interest to us all is the resignation of our venerable friend and father in the ministry, the Rev. J. Marshall, of Over. After fifty-

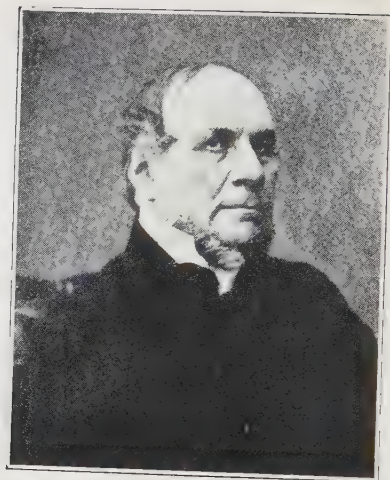
<sup>1</sup> November 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps not strictly the first, as a Rev. Wm. Dransfield preached at Over from 1814-18, leaving then for Wednesbury, and finally entering the Established Church (Rev. G. G. Whitfield).

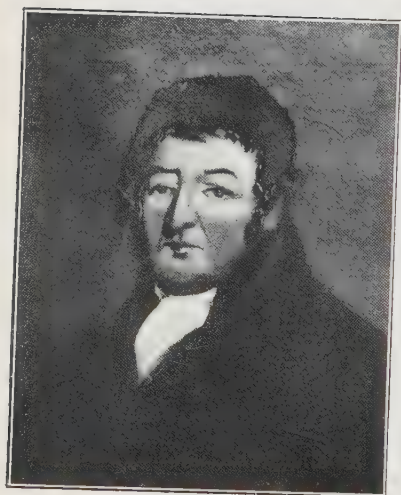
<sup>3</sup> Mr. Marshall was then nineteen years of age and had been at Glasgow University until the death of his father cut short his course. His intention was to pursue private teaching, but the engagement to preach at Over, made for him by his brother—a minister at Macclesfield—altered all his plans! He settled in November 1820, and was ordained in 1823.

<sup>4</sup> November 1822.

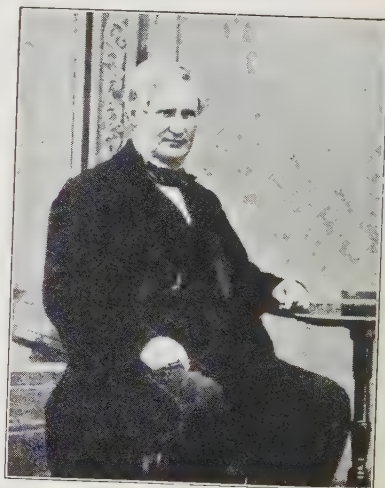




Rev. JOHN MARSHALL.



MR. WILLIAM HITCHEN



MR GEORGE JACKSON.

five years<sup>1</sup> of devoted labour at Over, during which the church has grown almost from nothing to be one of the most influential in the county, Mr. Marshall has closed his ministry and retired to spend the remainder of his days in well-earned repose, gladdened by the almost more than filial affection of his many children in the Gospel, among whom he will still continue to dwell. There is something satisfying to the mind in the rounded completeness of such a life—a life so rich in usefulness during its morning and midday, and in its evening enjoying the fruits of long and true service. It would ill become this Union, of which Mr. Marshall was in former years one of the most active members, to allow this opportunity to pass without recording its admiration of his remarkable career, and its prayer that God may bless him with health and strength, and spare him long to enjoy his rest, now that the heat and burden of the day is over.”

Mr. Marshall had a colleague in the Rev. J. Irving for some years—1868 to 1875. Mr. Irving then removed to Tunbridge Wells; and in the same year the Rev. J. T. Maxwell, late of East Grinstead, Sussex, became sole pastor. During his time—in 1880—a new school was built, embalming in its name, “The Marshall Memorial School,” the gratitude of the builders. Also at Minshull £500 was spent in repairing and repewing the chapel, erecting an organ, adding a school-room, &c. Mr. Maxwell closed an eminently useful ministry in 1886 when he removed to Plymouth, being succeeded in the same year by the present minister, Rev. G. G. Whitfield, from Haslingden. A stationary population, tending to become more and more exclusively working-class, together with the constant drain of its best young life to busier centres, has made work at Over a thing of increasing difficulty. But there has come no loss of heart or hope, and much has been done in addition to the quiet sowing of good seed in church and school. Thus a debt of £375, which Mr. Whitfield found on a plot of land and the organ, has been cleared off. A lecture-room, costing £260; an organ-chamber, costing £164; an infant-room, costing £120; lavatories, costing £95—all these have been built and paid for with the exception of about £7. Surely no mean record of generous effort, implying a core of vigorous life!

Over and Minshull appear as an aided “cause” or “causes” for the last time in the Report of 1834. Before the next Report (1840) the need of “further aid” has ceased. To what extent

<sup>1</sup> He died in 1879, and was considered Pastor Emeritus to the end. Reckoning from November 1820—the date of his settlement—this makes up nearly sixty years.



the two places had actually benefited by the Union it is impossible to say, inasmuch as prior to Mr. Scholefield's settlement at Over in 1819 the grants were included in those to the Itinerant (or minister) at Middlewich; and this continued to be the case (so far as Minshull was concerned) until Mr. Marshall took charge in 1834. Nor is there any clue to the specific payments made either to Mr. Scholefield or Mr. Marshall on account of Over. Payments in respect of Over are only mentioned twice (1809, rent at Over, £2, 12s. 6d.; 1815-16, supplies at Over, £4, 12s. 6d.), and in respect of Minshull not at all. The latter, indeed, must have contributed more than it received—a fact confirmatory of the tradition which prevails at Minshull that it was never an aided place. Thus (contributed to the Union):—

| DATE.   | £    | s. | d. |                                |                      |
|---------|------|----|----|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1807-08 | . 16 | 5  | 7  | (per Mr. Jackson and friends). |                      |
| 1808-09 | . 7  | 4  | 0  | „                              | „                    |
| 1809    | . 27 | 0  | 0  | „                              | „                    |
| 1815-16 | . 26 | 0  | 0  | Minshull                       | (Over, £5, 1s. 10d.) |
| 1819-20 | . 9  | 15 | 0  | „                              |                      |
| 1820-21 | . 9  | 9  | 3  | „                              |                      |
| 1821-22 | . 10 | 0  | 0  | „                              |                      |
| 1827-28 | . 7  | 5  | 0  | „                              | (Over, £5.)          |
| 1832-33 | .    | —  |    |                                | (Over, £5.)          |

The brothers George and William Jackson, starters of the work at Minshull Hill, were admirable men—most generous givers as well as devoted servants of the church. George died before 1837 and William went back to Tattenhall. A son of George, bearing the same name, was a deacon at Minshull Hill for many years. He retired to Middlewich in the early nineties, and died there on May 22, 1899. His son, also named George, was the organist at Minshull for twenty years previous to his removal in 1901 to Newcastle-under-Lyne, where he now lives. And his son, again, still another George, was architect for the alterations and work recently carried out at the old place in commemoration of its centenary. A brother of this last George is connected with the Congregational Church at Oswestry, and a sister lives at Middlewich—all united by a great warmth of interest in Minshull.

A Miss Jackson appears, under the head of Minshull in the last Report, as subscriber of £1.

## Sandbach and Wheelock.

"About the year 1791 the Rev. John Reece, late of Sheffield Sandbach. and then of Congleton,<sup>1</sup> assisted by Mr. Richard Dale, a deacon of the church of Congleton, began to preach in a cottage in this village. The service was afterwards removed to a school-room, where it was continued by the joint exertions of the gentlemen above mentioned, assisted by the Rev. Job Wilson and others, till the year 1799, when it ceased and was not revived before 1807." Such is the account of the beginning of work at Sandbach, as supplied to Mr. Rhodes by an old inhabitant, and communicated by him to Mr. Urwick in a letter dated November 11, 1862. Mr. Rhodes added that he thought there was "every reason to credit it"; and that he had found "an old thatched building, now forming a barn, and a cottage which, many years back, was used by the Primitive Methodists as a Sunday school and place of worship," and that probably this was the school-room where Mr. Dale used to preach.

The revival in 1807 came through the agency of the Union, which made Sandbach the earliest scene of its operations. Here William Silvester, a student in Mr. Roby's Academy—recommended by Mr. Roby as the best man he had for the Union's purpose—arrived, "a perfect stranger," in April 1807, and was a few days "abiding in the town to see what the Lord intended to do by him." No opening appeared at first, and the young evangelist encountered much opposition. "The country in and round Sandbach was dark as midnight," and "even the zealous Methodists had failed to make any impression." But before long<sup>2</sup> he had done more than gain a foothold. "A neat, commodious chapel," made out of a barn,<sup>3</sup> was opened, "unencumbered with any debt, of 36 feet by 21 feet, with a gallery at one end"; and "a numerous," "respectable," and "attentive" audience gathered. A church, moreover, was formed, and many persons gave "pleasing evidence of a real and saving change of heart and life." This bright dawn, "amid clouds," did not prove deceptive. For some years Mr. Silvester continued to meet with steady success. Congregation large and church "very considerably increased" is the Report of 1811. The Sunday school promises extensive usefulness, says the Report of 1813. A year later there is some "declension of the cause": "iniquity abounds

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be a mistake. Mr. Reece was ordained at Congleton in April 1793, and removed to Sheffield in 1797 (see Urwick, p. 160).

<sup>2</sup> First Report, October 15, 1808.

<sup>3</sup> In Wellbank, a back-street on the Common.

and the love of many waxes cold." But the pastor is sustained by the sympathy of at least a few faithful souls "who are desirous of continuing in the use of Scripture means," and are "instant in prayer" for a revival—which seems to have come, for "I am happy to inform you," says Mr. Silvester in 1816, "that the Lord seems to smile upon us at Sandbach." Additions of "some respectable families in the neighbourhood" have brought new strength to church and school. The latter, particularly, is "in a very prosperous way." Still "very prosperous," with "a good supply of teachers," and fair fruit of their labours is also the Report of 1820; while as to the church the pastor writes modestly: "We have nothing to boast of, but we have many things to be thankful for." Its "good estate" during the next few years is vouched for by the fact that before the date of the next Report (1829) Sandbach had become self-supporting. In 1837 the old barn-chapel was deserted for what is substantially the present building, Hope Chapel—erected at a cost of £1200,<sup>1</sup> with accommodation for "about 400 hearers," and "convenient school-rooms."

After thirty-nine years' ministry Mr. Silvester died on 1st September 1846, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and was buried in the chapel yard amid every token of sorrow and respect. His successor, the Rev. John Moss, stayed but a short time—resigning in August 1848, on account of "differences" between the people and himself. The Rev. William Rhodes followed with a pastorate of twenty-one years (July 1849 to June 30, 1870), marked throughout by "earnest and faithful labour."<sup>2</sup>

In 1871 Mr. Thomas Lunt, a student of Lancashire College, settled and remained till 1878, when he took "orders in the Church of England."<sup>3</sup> Then, in 1880, comes this rather melancholy note: "Since the retirement of its last minister this church, so intimately associated with the revered name of William Silvester, one of the first and one of the greatest evangelists ever connected with this Union, has found itself so enfeebled as to be unable to support a minister, and therefore appeals to you for help. The Executive Committee could see no reason for declining this call; and, therefore, recommended that a grant be made to Sandbach at the rate of £50 a year, on condition that the church made up the income of

<sup>1</sup> Opened July 5. Preachers, Rev. James Hill, of Oxford, and S. Luke, of Chester. Collections, £56, 17s. 9½d. "No oppressive burden remaining."—*Evangelical Magazine* for 1837, p. 535.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1871.

<sup>3</sup> Report of 1879. He was inducted to a "living" in the neighbourhood, where he is still.

the minister to £150 a year. The difficulties seem to be only temporary, and a helping hand held out at this juncture will, in all probability, soon restore the church to self-dependence." A minister was obtained in the Rev. D. R. Davies, late of Newport, Monmouthshire, whose work at first had excellent results, and led the deputation of 1881 to "speak in strong terms of the healthy, vigorous life of the church and perfect unity of pastor and people." But the "unity" was short-lived, and early in 1884 Mr. Davies resigned on the ground of "his health."

In 1886 the Rev. H. J. Basden, formerly assistant to Dr. Pulsford, Edinburgh, took up the charge, and there was a gleam of prosperity. In 1889, however, he has resigned, and the state of things is reported as "lower than it has been for some time past"—the little church having also lost thirteen "members by removal from the district."<sup>1</sup> In 1890 the Rev. J. Howard Fry, late of Faringdon, in Berkshire, undertook what seemed to be a promising experiment, in becoming the joint pastor of Sandbach, Wheelock, and Alsager—with the full sympathy and liberal support of the Union. In 1891 Sandbach is said to be "slowly but surely recovering" under the new arrangement. In 1892 it has suffered from "an extraordinary amount of sickness," but has heart enough to resolve upon new school premises and a new organ. In 1893, however, the arrangement with Mr. Fry is said to have grown impracticable; and Sandbach engages "to carry forward" its own work, with the Rev. F. Carter, of Northwich, as honorary pastor. A student from Nottingham Institute was engaged as a sort of *locum tenens*. In 1894 the new school, so long desired, was opened. In 1895 the debt upon it was reduced to £100; and although there had been great losses by death or resignation of members, the church, as well as the Sunday school, was "improving." In fact, the "student" ministry was by no means a failure, particularly that of Mr. H. Hooper,<sup>2</sup> who rendered some months of service in 1896-97.

But the need was for a trained minister, and one at length was secured at the invitation of Wheelock as well as Sandbach, on the understanding that he worked these two near neighbours together. No better choice, in respect of scholarly attainments, character and experience, could have been made than of the Rev. J. Hampden Cook, M.A., of Dolgelly, who settled in

<sup>1</sup> Report of 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Settled at Frodsham in 1897, but, at the period of his connection with Sandbach, was preparing for the ministry under the direction of Dr. Paton (*not* apparently at the College).

February 1900, and, without effecting any striking changes, has raised the tone in both places, rallied all that is good, and patiently sown the seed of blessings yet to be reaped.

Wheelock.

The Report of 1822 says: "In course of this period" (*i.e.* since October 1820) "a door has been opened in the populous village of Wheelock for the preaching of the Gospel, and Mr. S(ilvester) has had the pleasure to see a number of persons, who have hitherto lived in sin and ignorance, manifest an anxiety to hear the Word of Life. The attendance, though not very numerous, has been regular and steady." Wheelock continued to share the services of Mr. Silvester till his death in 1846, and was still "under the same pastorate as that at Sandbach" in 1863.<sup>1</sup> The fact that in 1866 it was proposed to make a grant towards the support of an evangelist "to labour at Haslington and Wheelock" implies that this was then no longer the case. Wheelock was in connection with the Staffordshire Itinerant Association for a year (1867-68). The proposal of 1866 then took effect under Mr. Buddell, and went on till 1875.

Then it was suggested by the Executive that the former arrangement, by which Wheelock was worked along with Sandbach and Haslington along with Crewe, was, in the light of experience, much to be preferred. But the two places did not see this; and prolonged the trial of a joint pastor under Rev. L. Crookall. Mr. Crookall resigned in 1879, and the two still held together in 1881—nay, were still inclined to risk the experiment of a third pastor; and even requested that to this end the Union should raise its grant from £20 to £80. But unfortunately—or as the Union thought, fortunately—the funds rendered it impossible to entertain the "modest" request, and the only grant made was one of £15 to Wheelock, with a "recommendation that it should be worked along with Sandbach." By 1883 the desired step had been taken. Being, however, what the Report of 1885 calls a "forced union," it was not productive of happy results; and, after the resignation of their minister, Mr. Davies (in 1884), the two churches again fell apart.

Wheelock next appears (in 1890) as one of a trio in charge of the Rev. J. Howard Fry, and speaks "very warmly of the benefit . . . derived from being included within the united pastorate." In 1892 it reports having raised, as the result of long striving, £850 towards the £1173 required for a new chapel; and increased congregations — notwithstanding the enforced

<sup>1</sup> Urwick, p. 195.



closing of the local ironworks in consequence of the "M'Kinlay Tariff." In 1893 (April) the new chapel, with school-room, is opened—"almost free of debt": and from this year till his removal to Suffolk in 1897 the church shared with Alsager the entire services of Mr. Fry. For that year it could report a vigorous monthly P.S.A.; eleven new members of the church, recruited mostly from the C.E.S.; and increasing attendances in chapel and school. But it felt strongly the lack of pastoral oversight; and was, therefore, urged by the Executive to join hands again with Sandbach. Instead of doing this, however, it took "the bold step" of securing a minister all to itself--viz., Mr. Lupton (late of Upper Mill), who was willing to take "whatever the people were able to contribute," and certainly did much to justify his election by the quality and energy of his work. But the situation was an embarrassing one for the Executive; and there could be no keen regret that the experiment, by its necessary failure, brought home to the friends at Wheelock their inability as yet to stand alone, and thus led up to that union under Mr. Cook which has worked so satisfactorily.

*Grants.*—Sandbach: 1807-08, Mr. Silvester (an itinerant minister), one year's salary, £70; removing goods, £1, 10s.; a donation for his faithful and laborious services, £10; half-year's salary, £35; loan to Sandbach Chapel, £10, 14s.

1808-09, Mr. Silvester's salary per annum, £70.

1809 (April), lease and deed of Sandbach Chapel, £2, 2s.

1811, Mr. Silvester's salary for two years, £140.

1815 (April)-1816 (Oct.), Mr. Silvester, Sandbach, £125, 10s.

1819 (Sept.)-1820 (Sept.), Mr. Silvester, Sandbach, £80.

1820 (Sept.)-1821 (Sept.), Mr. Silvester, Sandbach, £80.

1827 (Oct.)-1828 (Oct.), Mr. Silvester, Sandbach, £80.

1880-82, Sandbach, £50 per annum.

1883-84, Sandbach and Wheelock, £65 (if minister receives £140).

1885-86, Sandbach, £20 or £60 (with minister); Wheelock, £20.

1887, Sandbach, £50; Wheelock, £16.

1888, Sandbach, £45; Wheelock, £16.

1889, Alsager, Sandbach, and Wheelock, £120.

1890, Alsager, Sandbach, and Wheelock, £125.

1891, Alsager, Sandbach, and Wheelock, £100.

1892, Alsager, Sandbach, and Wheelock, £85.

1893-94, Sandbach, £25; Alsager and Wheelock, £60.

1895-96, Sandbach, £25; Alsager and Wheelock, £45.

1897-99, Sandbach, £25; Wheelock, £25.

1900-02, Sandbach and Wheelock, £75 (for the two churches with one minister).

1903-05, Sandbach and Wheelock, £70 (for the two churches with one minister).

1906, Sandbach and Wheelock, £72, 10s. (for the two churches with one minister).

## BRERETON.\*

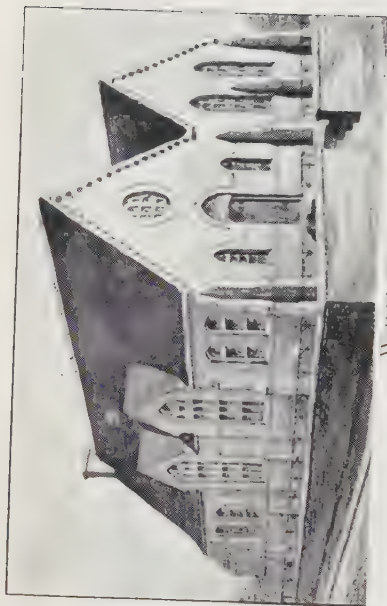
Brereton (also called Brereton Green), three miles north-east of Sandbach, was one of the places evangelised by Wm. Silvester some time before 1820. In the Report of that year it is mentioned as already among his regular out-mission stations. In 1822 a chapel is said to be contemplated. This intention took effect, it would seem, through the agency of Mr. Thomas Johnson, of Nether Knutsford, to whom the chapel certainly belonged in 1832—since, on 15th February of that year, the “small building” then occupied as a chapel, together with the two cottages adjoining, were handed over to trustees, in consideration of the sum of 10s., for perpetual use as a place for divine worship, according to the tenets and practice of Protestant Dissenters who profess the principles of the Independent denomination.<sup>1</sup> The trustees (including such well-known names as Richard Dutton, Joseph Hitchin, Thomas and John Bostock) were representatives of the County Union, in whose behalf they accepted the bequest. Accordingly, services were held here and a church formed, and from 1870 onward to 1882 the place is entered in the yearly reports as an out-station of Sandbach. But “the Congregationalists found it a matter of extreme difficulty to work the cause.” In 1882, therefore, the trustees, who are the same as the trustees of Hope Chapel, Sandbach, although the trusts and the trust deeds are both quite distinct, began to *let*<sup>2</sup> the chapel and the adjacent cottage to the Primitive Methodists. They pay a small rental and keep the property in repair. The agreement with them is for a short term of years and is renewed from time to time. It is stipulated that the Congregational minister at Sandbach shall preach in the building at least twice a year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are identified with the “faith and order” agreed upon at the Savoy Conference of October 12, 1658!

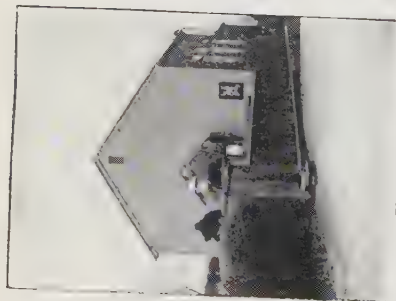
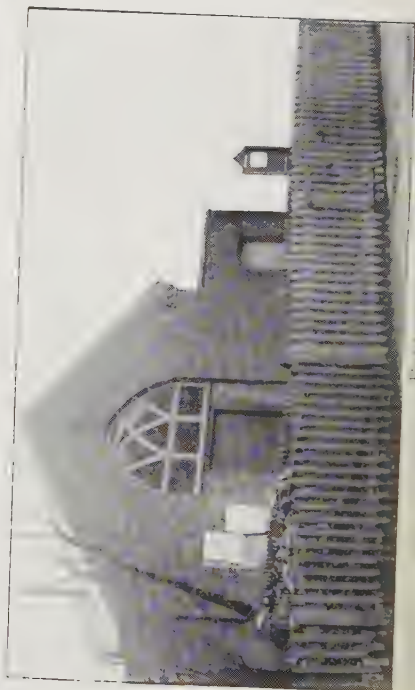
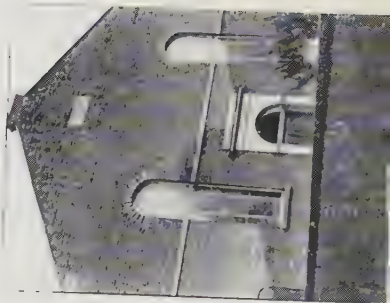
<sup>2</sup> A clause in the deed, leaving it to the discretion of the trustees how they use the chapel for its “better establishment,” seems to provide for such action.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from letter of Rev. E. Hampden-Cook, to whom also I owe the “loan” of a copy of the trust-deed.





WHEELER



HASLINGTON.

## STOCKPORT DISTRICT.

### SECRETARIES.

|                       |   |   |   |   |            |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Rev. W. Urwick, M.A.  | . | . | . | . | 1865-1874. |
| Rev. A. Stroyan       | . | . | . | . | 1874-1878. |
| Rev. T. Hartley       | . | . | . | . | 1878-1882. |
| Rev. H. Harries, M.A. | . | . | . | . | 1882-1888. |

## MACCLESFIELD DISTRICT.

### SECRETARIES.

|                        |   |   |   |   |            |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Rev. Watson Smith      | . | . | . | . | 1865-1878. |
| Rev. G. J. Allen, B.A. | . | . | . | . | 1878-1888. |

## STOCKPORT AND MACCLESFIELD DISTRICTS.

### SECRETARIES.

|                        |   |   |   |   |            |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Rev. G. J. Allen, B.A. | } | . | . | . | 1888-1890. |
| Rev. H. Harries, M.A.  | } | . | . | . |            |
| Rev. J. Brunton Aitken | } | . | . | . | 1890-1893. |
| Rev. H. Harries, M.A.  | } | . | . | . |            |
| Rev. H. Harries, M.A.  | } | . | . | . | 1893-1894. |
| Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A. | } | . | . | . |            |
| Rev. J. B. Aitken      | } | . | . | . | 1894-1903. |
| Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A. | } | . | . | . |            |
| Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A. | } | . | . | . | 1903 —     |
| Mr. A. W. Bragg.       | } | . | . | . |            |

## Bollington.

THE Rev. G. B. Kidd, then minister of Roe Street, Macclesfield, wrote in 1863: "Some years ago a number of members belonging to the church" (at Roe Street) "withdrew for the purpose of forming a Congregational Church at Bollington (distant four miles), who have become more than thirty, and to whom, and the congregation worshipping with them in an upper room, the



Lancashire Bicentenary Committee in Manchester have kindly and generously granted a sum of £500 towards the erection of a Congregational chapel at Bollington. An equal sum has also been promised by the friends in Macclesfield; and a suitable site will be obtained, and the building of the chapel proceeded with, as soon as there is some improvement in the circumstances of the times."

In the Report of 1866 it is noted that the "new chapel is in course of erection"; and that the Macclesfield District Committee "have entered upon evangelistic labours at Bollington" by the help of "funds" entrusted to it at the last annual meeting of the Union. This year, also, brought the settlement of the Rev. T. S. Wade, the first minister; and by April 1867, though the place of meeting was still "the upper room," the opening of the new chapel was in sight. This event took place early in 1868, and soon the morning congregation had increased from 80 to 100, and the evening from 100 to 220. The Sunday school, too, sprang up from 50 to 205, while the church added 17 to its membership of 37. "At no distant period," comments a sanguine secretary, "so vigorous a cause will be self-sustaining!" Continued progress during another year evokes an expression of the same hope in 1869. But, first of all, the chapel must be cleared of its heavy debt; and in 1870 the Union is moved, by admiration of the people's energy in raising £280, 3s. towards that object, to advance its grant from £50 to £70.

In the course of 1870 the congregation raised nearly £400 for the debt and general purposes, and the grant of £70 was renewed. At this date (1871) the church had a membership of 90. For the next three years the grant stood at £60; and it is said in 1873 that this tax on the funds would cease if only the debt (some £750), together with the ground rent, could be cancelled. To this end, therefore, the efforts of the Union and the congregation alike were directed. In 1875 Mr. Stanley Wood, the treasurer, offered £25 on condition that the whole of the debt was removed by the end of that year, and this offer was so far successful that by April of 1876 £521 had been promised, including £185 from the people themselves, mostly "factory operatives." Let gentlemen in search of a good investment for a philanthropic outlay, it is urged, now come forward, and, by clearing off the balance, relieve at once the Union, and "enable a most deserving minister to receive an adequate stipend." This welcome result was achieved. Moreover, "besides undertaking to provide an additional £200 or so for the addition of boundary walls," the church asked for £20 less of grant. But

the Committee still made it £60, with an understanding that Mr. Wade's stipend should be £150 instead of £120.

Meanwhile, it is noted that financial anxieties have not been allowed to check spiritual work. In 1878, for example, the church members number 98, and Mr. Wade is congratulated on the prospect of his reaping at length some adequate fruit of patient sowing. But the next year announces changes for the worse. Bollington, being a manufacturing town, has suffered from the general depression of trade; Mr. Wade has left, and with him a number of the members; and the "return sheet" shows a debt of £100—not all due to the chapel wall! A strong stimulus towards improvement proceeded from the settlement of the Rev. S. W. Dadson (formerly assistant minister to the Rev. R. M. Davies, of Oldham), and again there is a confident expectation (1880) that the church, now a dependant for thirteen years, will soon be strong enough to go alone, and the grant drops to £45. When it could be reported in 1881 that 49 new members had been added during the year and that all the signs pointed to prosperity,<sup>1</sup> the expectation became a decided opinion that the church will ask little or nothing "by the end of another year." Alas! the prosperity was short-lived. Something led to so serious a falling off that, during the summer of 1883, Mr. Dadson "felt it his duty to resign," and, going to reside at Oldham, in a few weeks was in his grave—the victim of an "overwrought brain."

For more than three years the church remained pastorless, and did not benefit thereby, although it paid off the debt on its boundary wall and redeemed its chief rent of £18. In 1885 the grant of £30 was voted in consideration of an assurance that the church would seek a minister without delay, and in a year or two at most would "set the Union free." But it was not till the end of 1886 that the Rev. Hugh S. Griffiths, formerly of Bangor, was invited to the pastorate, while the other part of the understanding yet awaits fulfilment. As to this, however, the Union was not peremptory, only advising that antiquated methods in the church should be dropped, and new ones—particularly the voluntary system—adopted. Mr. Griffiths saw to it that, so far as possible, the advice was taken; and asked for £20 in 1888, with something like certainty that "next year" would bring them to the goal. "Next year," however, there is a movement on foot for purchasing a new organ and for building a large class-room suitable for week-night services, &c., and the goal has receded. Consequently, while "thankful for the

<sup>1</sup> Evening attendance, 368; church members, 119, &c.

prosperity which has attended Mr. Griffith's ministry," the Committee is emphatic in "its opinion" that "after this year" (1889), the state of dependence must come to an end, and is sure that it is backed up in this opinion "by all who know the history of the church, and are interested in its welfare."

But, inasmuch as the church could plead "several losses" by the removal of families from the neighbourhood, the Assembly acted on its opinion "next year" (1890) only to the extent of docking £5—though with the condition attached that the minister's stipend should be £150; and a strong recommendation that the church should "adopt some form of weekly offering." Nay, by April 1891 the Union has quite forgotten, apparently, its intention to be severe, and raises the grant to £30,<sup>1</sup> because the church has sustained such severe losses, and yet (as the schedule shows<sup>2</sup>) has done so well.

Before the 1892 Report Mr. Griffiths has removed to Gainsborough, and £30 is handed over to the District Committee for a new pastor—provided he be assured of more than £100. In 1893 there was no grant as there was no pastor, though before the annual meeting of that year the Rev. A. Buckley, of Lancashire College, had settled. In fact, a grant was not given, because not asked for, till 1896, when "several serious losses by death and removal" again called for it. At the same time steady progress in all the activities of the church, including a Christian Endeavour Society and P.S.A., was reported, and a greatly improved outlook due to adoption, at last, of the weekly offering system. In 1898 Mr. Buckley removed to Longton; and for two years the church, being without pastor, was without grant. Then the settlement of the present minister (Rev. S. Bond) occasioned a request for aid once more, and £30 was voted—the amount at which it has stood ever since. Nor is it easy to see how a continuance of aid could reasonably be denied. There has been to all appearance no lack of zeal or unity or generosity in the church. Year by year the Reports tell the same story of steady effort and growth. Work among the young people, by means of the Christian Endeavour Society, Bible classes, and Band of Hope, seems to have been specially fruitful, and, on the whole, Bollington is as sound and strong spiritually as at any time in its history. But perhaps it has failed to realise sufficiently the duty and privilege of independence. Bent on material extensions and improvements—first a new chapel, then a boundary wall, then new class-rooms, then an organ, then the land on

<sup>1</sup> In the previous January the Executive had voted a "donation" of £10!

<sup>2</sup> Receipts for all purposes, £216, 19s. 6½d.

which the chapel is built, then a manse—it may be said to have put these rather too much in the front, and forgotten, to some extent, the obligation lying upon every Congregational church in the first place to become self-sustaining as soon as possible. On the other hand, there is no case in the county which better illustrates the spirit of the Union—its considerateness, its patience, its large-heartedness.

*Grants.*—1866, £37, 10s. 1867, £50. 1868–71, £70. 1872–73, £60. 1874, £50. 1875–76, £60. 1877, £50 (stipend to be £150). 1878, £50. 1879, £40 or £45 (half while vacant). 1880–84, £45. 1885–87, £30. 1888–89, £20. 1890, £15 (stipend to be £150). 1891–92, £30. 1895–97, £25. 1900–05, £30. 1906, £28.

### Bramhall.

This rapidly growing district, lying between Stockport and Cheadle Hulme, attracted the attention of local Congregationalists some time before 1900. Its claims were at once recognised by the District Committee, and a circular was issued to the effect that these were such as to make it seem “advisable to start a Congregational service on Sunday mornings.” To assist in meeting the expenses of a promising enterprise the Union made a grant in April of £20.

The congregations soon showed an increasing average, with a firm nucleus of twenty persons, representing nine families, who signed a roll of adherence. Moreover, plans for a school chapel, on land adjoining the hall in which the service was held, were in 1901 already drawn and approved, though it did not yet appear wise to incur the cost (some £800) of acting upon them.

In September 1901 an evening service was commenced, and justified itself. In July 1902 a church was formed consisting of twenty-five persons, who “signed the roll as the first members of the Bramhall Congregational Church.” In January 1903 the formation of a Sunday school marked another step forward. In the same year the school chapel was at length actually set going, and in March of 1904 was opened free of debt, although the original estimate of £800 had been exceeded by £500.

Till June 1905 the pulpit had been served from the beginning by neighbouring ministers, Lancashire College students, and casual supplies; but after the opening of the new chapel, the church began to look out for a pastor, and in that month had the joy of welcoming the settlement of Rev. W. P. Cousins, M.A.,



B.D. (from Ossett). "His work," says the latest Report, "has told favourably upon all the organisations of the church." Church, Sunday school, congregations, notwithstanding some serious losses, have been more than maintained. One outstanding society, "The Literary and Social Union," has reached a membership of seventy-one. The finances, too, are good, and promise speedy relief for the Union. This last is very desirable. For the first two years the grant was £20; for the rest it has been £30, in addition to an extra grant of £30 from the special fund of the Church Aid Society for 1905 and 1906.

Bramhall is one of those suburban churches which are expected by the Union to become self-sustaining at the earliest possible moment, so that other places really necessitous may receive adequate help. It cannot be doubted that the church realises this, and will very shortly claim its independence.<sup>1</sup>

### Cheadle.

In April 1860 an application was laid before the Union at its annual meeting in Stockport from "friends" at Cheadle for a grant to aid them in carrying on "new and enlarged operations." For some years a room in the village had been used for preaching and Sunday school work; but "a chapel with school-room attached" was now in course of erection, and the "large outlay" made it difficult to keep going without some temporary help. £30 was at once readily voted, and renewed the next year (1861), but in 1862 "the schedule was returned with an intimation that the friends at Cheadle have decided to endeavour to raise a sufficient sum to enable them to sustain their minister by their own efforts."

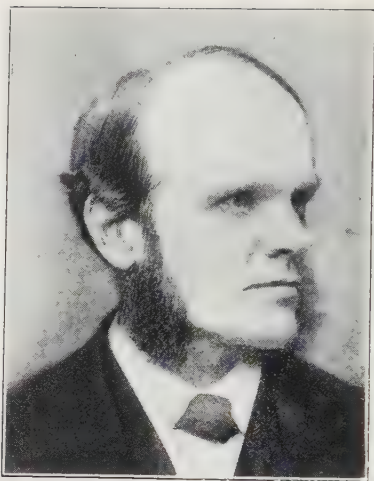
The room aforesaid was in "an old farmhouse (granted rent free by Sir James Watts) opposite the present London and North-Western Railway station. After being "furnished with pulpit and forms," it was opened on 13th March 1853. Previous to this date,<sup>2</sup> however, "meetings for prayer and preaching" had been commenced by Mr. Peter Gent in a cottage near Cheadle; and, earlier still, "the friends" who rallied round him had attended Heaton Mersey Chapel, then and for long under the "pastoral care" of the Rev. Stephen Hooper. Mr. Gent was the

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written it has been informally announced that the church has decided to go off the fund.

<sup>2</sup> About 1852.







Professor HERBERT.



Rev. J. W. PAULL.

preacher at the "old farmhouse," and the Sunday school, started near the same time, flourished under the superintendence of Mr. William Sturdy. But it was due to the "faithful Gospel ministry" of Mr. Isaac Neild, who presently took the place of Mr. Gent<sup>1</sup> as "leader and pastor," that the necessity arose for "a larger place."

In 1859 a meeting at the old farmhouse—a meeting of six only<sup>2</sup>—faced the necessity by a resolution to build a chapel and school forthwith, and by a subscription on the spot of £1225. On November 5, 1859, the work was begun, and on 17th June 1860 the school-room was opened.<sup>3</sup>

As to the chapel, we read in the 1860 Report: "A handsome stone chapel, calculated for 400 sittings, and, with the land, to cost from £2300 to £2400, is now being built. About £1500 have been contributed." A year later we read that "since June last the brethren and friends have worshipped in the new school-room attached to their elegant chapel," and that "the congregations have increased from 70 and 100 to 100 and 150 in the morning and evening respectively, and about twenty Christian brethren constitute the nucleus of what promises soon to be a flourishing church." The chapel held its dedicatory services<sup>4</sup> on 14th April 1861, and "the friends contributed so liberally towards the building funds during the progress of the work, and especially at the opening services," that Mr. Paxton Hood was able at their close to declare the chapel opened free of debt.

Mr. Neild, like Mr. Gent, was a "layman." He preached at the old farmhouse. But, "from the opening of the services at the new school-room," we are told, "the preachers were various, chiefly students from the Lancashire College, until the Rev. Robert Panks, of Truro, came to be the pastor." His ministry, though full of faithful work, was very short; it began on 5th May 1861, and ended with his death (at the age of forty-two) on 6th February 1862. He has had but three successors: the Rev. R. C. Lumsden, from 1862 to 1868; the Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A., from 1868 till his appointment to the Chair of Philosophy at Lancashire College in 1876; the Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A., who came from Western College in the latter year, and has continued unto this present, with blessing to the church and honour to him-

<sup>1</sup> This worthy Christian gentleman had to remove from Cheadle.

<sup>2</sup> Messrs. Isaac Neild, Thomas Kendal, James Milne, Thomas Roberts, Thomas Jones, John Hughes.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Stephen Hooper and Rev. N. K. Pugsley preached.

<sup>4</sup> The Revs. Andrew Reid, Joseph Parker, Alexander Thompson, Professor Newth and Paxton Hood took part. Many of these particulars are from a sketch of the history of the church communicated to Mr. Paull by Mr. John Hughes.

self. He is, too, and has long been, one of the real "pillars" of the Union.

Mr. Herbert died in 1878, and the Report for that year contains the following deserved tribute to him: "Two years ago we congratulated Professor Herbert on his appointment to a Chair in Lancashire College; to-day we have to lament his death. It is a brief while, and yet it sufficed to let us know how great he was, as well as we had known before how good he was. The greatness of some men grows up in the sight of all, like the bulk of one of the forest giants; but others grow great by some internal process, like the growth of the coral reef in the silent depths of the sea, and are only made known, as it is made known, by some accidental change of circumstances. A single session sufficed to show that Mr. Herbert combined, in a rare degree, the great teacher and the finished scholar. Besides his general fitness for academical work, he possessed an almost unrivalled knowledge of the feud between science and theology . . . and a rare faculty for abating their unnatural strife. This was a priceless qualification in one who is called to mould the minds of our rising ministry at a time when error assumes a thousand truth-like forms. We thought we had found the very man for the church's needs—*sed Dis aliter visum*—it was not to be. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; we can only say, 'Thy will be done.' " A few items of biography, supplied by his surviving brother, Mr. William Herbert, of Nottingham, may here be added. Mr. Herbert "settled at Nether Chapel, Sheffield, in 1859, and was there for three years, leaving in June 1862." He "came to Bowdon in August of the same year, and preached at the Downs till December 1863. Then he was unsettled, and remained in Bowdon—preaching here, there, and everywhere every Sunday—until the beginning of May 1868, when he settled at Cheadle for eight of the happiest years of his life." His only published volume, "Moral Realism Examined," is a classic of its kind, and ought to be reprinted.

There is no need to say that Mr. G. Stanley Wood—whilom Treasurer of the Union, twice Chairman, and always one of its most loyal supporters—is an eminent member of the Cheadle church. May it be long ere the need arises to record his biography!

#### LONG LANE.

Long Lane, between Handforth and Cheadle, owes its origin to James Bailey, father of Rev. J. R. Bailey, of Eccles. This good man used to drive from his home in Cheadle week by week

to Chelford, and became impressed with the need of providing some place of worship for the people about Long Lane nearer than Cheadle, on the one hand, or Handforth on the other. He found that "sundry residents of Long Lane" felt as he did, and the first practical outcome of their concern showed itself in occasional services held in the cottage of a certain Mrs. Walsh (about 1862). The next step was to hire a cottage, and, by throwing its two lower rooms into one, to make a space sufficiently large to accommodate an increasing congregation. The third step was the formation of a Sunday school in the same place—Sunday school and services alike being under the charge of Mr. Bailey, who walked "from Cheadle to Long Lane and back three times" every Sunday.<sup>1</sup> At length, about 1867, the present chapel was erected, in view of the urgent need for still more space. Here, again, Mr. Bailey was the leading spirit,<sup>2</sup> and may surely be said to have well deserved the "Memorial Tablet"—mural brass—which was unveiled in April 1906 by a granddaughter of his own, Miss Nellie Bailey, in recognition by local friends of his good work so well done. "Long Lane is not a separate church. The members residing there are on the roll of Cheadle; but a communion service is held once a month. There is a Sunday school of about fifty scholars, which meets morning and afternoon, and a preaching service on Sunday evenings. Since 1882 there has been also a Day school."<sup>3</sup>

#### CHEADLE HEATH.

No church has yet been formed in this rapidly developing district of Stockport, but one is on its way, thanks to the foresight and enterprise of the Stockport and District Congregational Association. The attention of the latter was first drawn to the matter (by the secretary) at a quarterly meeting held on June 17, 1902, and steps were taken in due course to find a suitable room for the holding of services, as well as a site for the erection of a place of worship. Difficulties arose in the way of both projects. But in March 1904 a site at the junction of the Edgeley and Cheadle old road (said to be every way the best) was bought from Mr. Sykes upon very reasonable terms, and a Committee appointed to consider building plans. After some further delay those of Mr. John Cubbon, of Manchester, were accepted in September 1905.

<sup>1</sup> He is said to have been much assisted by one Lot Faulkner, a Wesleyan brother and well-known local "character." Mr. Bailey had himself once been a Wesleyan class leader and local preacher.

<sup>2</sup> He and the comrade aforesaid.

<sup>3</sup> From particulars kindly supplied by Rev. J. W. Paull.



The cost of the school chapel, which it is proposed to erect, will not be less than £2300, towards which the Lancashire and Cheshire Building Society has voted a grant of £300 and a loan of like amount, while promises of about £270 (mostly paid up) have been secured from local friends. It remains now to widen the appeal for help, and this the Committee hope soon to do.

As to a temporary room for services, one has at last been found in the new Council School, Cheadle Heath; and on September 30 last Dr. Goodrich, of Chorlton Road, Manchester, "preached the opening sermon to a congregation of about 200. Various ministers in the neighbourhood have taken the services during October," and since. Proceeding, as it does, under the sympathetic sanction of the District Committee and with the active support of several local gentlemen, the "Edgeley Road Congregational School Chapel"—as it is called—appears to be assured of a prosperous future. A few years, in fact, may see it a strong church.<sup>1</sup>

### Cheadle Hulme.

At a meeting of the Stockport District Committee, January 16, 1867, Rev. A. Wilson, of Hanover Chapel, mentioned that some gentlemen residing in this village had suggested the "opening of a preaching room," and inquiry was resolved upon. In the following October it was agreed that, notwithstanding "the movements of the Methodists at this place, it is desirable that the Independents should begin an interest there." The consequent steps up to the erection of the chapel are recorded in a minute of January 3, 1870. On October 2, 1868, plans were accepted for the building of church and schools, at a total cost of £2739; on November 23 instructions were given to proceed with the work of building at once—the schools to be finished as soon as possible, so that services might be held there until the chapel was ready; on May 27, 1869, Sir James Watts laid the foundation stone; on June 20, in the same year, the Rev. Absalom Clark, of Stockport, and the Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A., of Cheadle, conducted the first services in the school-room; on June 22 a church was formed of twenty-three members, Messrs. Storey, Thompson, and Boyd being elected deacons. The services, conducted by students from Lancashire College and ministers from other churches, soon had an average attendance of from forty to ninety persons; funds<sup>2</sup> were raised by "a box

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from information kindly furnished by Mr. A. Wisely Bragg.

<sup>2</sup> About £60 a year.

at the entrance," and definite sums subscribed "by several of the members," while the Union made a grant of £50. On Thursday, July 7, 1870, the new chapel was opened by the Rev. Thomas Binney, of London, the collections amounting to £322, 16s. 10d. On November 14, 1871,<sup>1</sup> the first minister, the Rev. J. W. Best, of Lancashire College, entered upon the pastorate, with immediate results for church and school which augured all good success. But his removal by death, on January 15, 1872, cut short the work he might have done.

"His great promise, and the beauty of his character, will doubtless obtain a fitting mention" from others, says the Report. "Yet we may express our deep sympathy with both the family and the church which have been so mysteriously bereaved." The latter proved its loyalty to his memory in the best way, by co-operating together heartily for increasing the church's strength and setting it free from debt. In April 1872 115 sittings, out of the available 360, had been taken; the evening congregations numbered 100, the church membership 39, the Sunday school 40; and, moreover, the debt of nearly £1500 had been reduced to £260. "We may expect to see this church," says the Report, "in a short time one of the most influential in the county." "Let us hope that, in her maturity, she will prove a dutiful daughter to her foster-mother, the Cheshire County Union." And indeed a year later (April 1873) the church, under its new pastor, the Rev. W. Tracey, of Spring Hill College, declared itself strong enough to go alone, and thereupon received the "sincere congratulations" of the Union on having attained so quickly to its "majority." The ministers since Mr. Best have been W. Tracey, from February 12, 1873, to November 9, 1874; D. N. Jordan, B.A., from April 4, 1875, to December 1883; G. D. Hughes, from November 16, 1884, to March 1901; A. E. Hawes, from September 8, 1901.

*Grants.*—1870, £25 or £50 (with minister). 1871, £20 or £50 (with minister). 1872, £30.

#### ADSWOOD MISSION.

Adswood Mission is a branch of the work of Cheadle Hulme. It began some twenty years ago in a cottage-room. As the attendance grew, the room had to be enlarged to accommodate thirty

<sup>1</sup> The District Minute-Book speaks of his settlement as if it had taken place before September 25.

or forty people, and a Sunday school was started in addition to the Sunday evening service. After years of patient continuance "amid considerable difficulties," the enlarged room became inconveniently crowded, and it was decided to build a hall. Friends in Cheadle Hulme and the district responded generously to the appeal for funds, and in April 1905 the hall was opened by Mr. Arthur A. Haworth, Chairman of the Union. The cost of land, building, and furnishing came to about £450, and was all met by the opening day. Volunteers have the work in hand, mostly from the Cheadle Hulme church, but also from other free churches in the neighbourhood. The hall, with its Sunday school, Sunday evening service, and other agencies should be a blessing to the village of 250 souls.

### Congleton.

Independency, as distinct from the old Nonconformity (which, as in so many places of Cheshire, issued in a Unitarian appropriation of the old chapel),<sup>1</sup> dates from 1790, when, through the labours and generosity of Captain Scott, a chapel was built and opened in Mill Street, 42 feet by 36 feet, with three galleries. The Rev. J. Reece was ordained as first pastor in 1793, and removed to Sheffield in 1797. The second minister, the Rev. John Handforth, was appointed in 1800, and about a year later removed to Gatley. Not much more than a year was the length of the next pastorate, that of Rev. Mr. Parsons (late of Chorley), who resigned in December 1802. The Rev. Thomas Bennett succeeded in 1805, and his stay also was brief. He settled at Duckinfield in November 1808. 1810 saw the settlement of the fifth minister, Rev. James Howes, who gave place the following year to Rev. John Williams, and he again to Rev. James Bridgeman in 1813. In 1814 Rev. George Marris became pastor, and held on till 1822. He and his three immediate predecessors were of the Countess of Huntingdon's "connection," and it was the decision of the church to recover its "independency" (in the strict sense) which led to his resignation; others resigned with him, and built a Countess of Huntingdon's place of worship, where Mr. Marris could go on preaching. This place, however, endured a few years only. His successor at Mill Street was the Rev. John Johnson, who settled in 1826 and withdrew to the Established Church in 1830. The Rev. George Edge came next,

<sup>1</sup> See Urwick, pp. 151-61.





REV. J. MOORE.



MR. B. RADLEY, J.P.



in January 1833, and in the same year at least<sup>1</sup> the church became an "aided" one. This appears from a letter of Mr. Charles Walworth, in April 1834, humbly thanking "the friends of the Cheshire Union for their very seasonable aid hitherto afforded us," and further soliciting "a continuance of their favour for the present." But the necessity was short-lived. In September the same correspondent reports: "Such is our improved condition, that in future we hope to be enabled to support our own cause without again troubling the friends of the Cheshire Union, and we humbly hope also, ere long, to be enabled to make some grateful return for the favours already conferred upon us."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Edge remained twelve years. His successor, the Rev. S. Gibbon, remained about twelve months. Then in May 1848 came the Rev. Joseph Moore, and he really settled. His career, inconspicuous as it might seem, is not one which can be passed by with a word. Born in February 1816 at Fareham, Hampshire, his absorbing desire and aim as a young man was to become a missionary. He applied to the London Missionary Society, and did so on the same day as another young man with whom he at once contracted a lifelong friendship. This was David Livingstone, who wrote, nine years later (1847), "Of all those I have met since we parted, I have seen none whom I can compare with you for true, hearty friendship." Mr. Moore went to Cheshunt College, while Livingstone walked the London hospitals. At first he was appointed to the South African mission, as the helper of Robert Moffat, but, for pressing reasons, this arrangement gave place to one which made Tahiti his destination. There he arrived, with his wife, in February 1843, and thence he was compelled to depart in June 1844, reaching London early in 1845. For the next three years the Missionary Society kept Mr. Moore busy with deputation work, varied by labour spent in revising the Tahitian translation of the Bible.

As already said, he came to Congleton in May 1848. Some ten years later Livingstone, during his first visit home, made a short stay with his friend, and "one evening he gave the story of his travels in a lecture to a crowded audience in the old Assembly Room." Quiet, solid work gradually built up the congregation until, in view of the unsuitability of the old chapel premises for enlargement, a new chapel became necessary. For this object Mr. Moore, by his written appeals alone, obtained £1000. In addition, the congregation raised amongst them-

<sup>1</sup> As the previous Report was in 1828 it may have come on for aid before.

<sup>2</sup> In 1851 and again in 1852 a "donation" of £15 was voted to Congleton (General Minute-Book).

selves not far short of £4000. Thus the handsome church in Antrobus Street was built, at a cost of about £6000, and was opened by Mr. Moore's old college friend, Dr. Allon, on 7th June 1877.<sup>1</sup> Eleven years later, in May 1888, after a ministry of forty years, Mr. Moore felt compelled by his growing infirmities to resign, but he still continued to live in Congleton, and died there on 1st January 1893. His church was his chief "charge" all along; to it he gave the best of his thought and of himself; and it remained his monument—"its record, the peace and harmony existing in the congregation, were a worthy crown to his well-spent life." But he preached more effectually by his character than by his speech. "His blameless and consistent life was the (main) source of the unquestioned influence he exerted, and which was so widely felt." Such a ministry is ideal of its kind, and its kind is the highest, considered in relation to the abiding welfare of a community.

It must be added that Mr. Moore had some efficient helpers—Mr. Maskery, for example, who joined the church sometime between 1841-43, was elected a deacon on 31st August 1845, and as deacon and treasurer served it faithfully till his death in August 1879. His son, Alderman S. Maskery, J.P. (Chairman of the Union in 1902), succeeded him in both offices, so that father and son have held them now for sixty years, surely an almost unique record! Mr. B. Radley, who died in February 1882, was another "staunch supporter." Admitted to the church in May 1844, "the tablet in the church records that for over thirty years he had served as a deacon, Sunday school teacher, and treasurer; while the testimony to his wife is that "she was invaluable as a helper in the Sunday school and the church up to the time of her death, shortly after Mr. Radley's, in 1882." Sometimes it happens in our smaller churches that the unstinted devotion and generosity of the "two or three" tempt the many to lean upon them overmuch, and this, in a measure, may have been the case at Congleton. But their due mead of praise must not be denied to the two or three on that account.

In October 1888 the Rev. E. R. Hayton, B.A., of Lancashire College, took up the "burden and the glory" bequeathed by Mr. Moore, and carried on the work till January 1902, when he removed to Tintwistle. Says Mr. Maskery: "Under Mr. Hayton's ministry the church maintained the position in which Mr. Moore had left it, as to numbers and the spirit of good-will that prevailed; but the death of one after another and the removal from

<sup>1</sup> The Mill Street Chapel—Captain Scott's—was sold, and became the hall of the Freemasons.

the town of many 'principal supporters' affected the financial condition of the church. The trade of the town not being progressive and prosperous, the church has not grown as it otherwise might have done."

In April 1902 the present minister, the Rev. Charles Llewellyn Allen, was called to the pastorate and commenced his ministry shortly afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

### Gatley.

Independency in this village is said to date from 1778, the first minister being the Rev. Jeremiah Pendlebury, late of Bolton. The chapel was built in 1779. Mr. Pendlebury died in August 1788 and had been unable to preach for some time. His assistant, the Rev. Samuel Turner, succeeded him, and was in charge till his death, August 28, 1792. The pastor from April 1794 to 1799 was the Rev. James Smith (a student of Rotherham). His successor—for a short time only—was the Rev. J. Macpherson, who removed to Liverpool. Then the Rev. J. Handforth, of Congleton, settled in July 1801 and continued till 1813, when the Rev. Thomas Chester became minister. The Report of 1820 speaks of Mr. Chester as having "laboured for some years under the patronage of the Union"—as one of its agents,<sup>2</sup> and with success: then there has been a great increase of attendance at Gatley—so much so that the church may be "compelled to erect a gallery in the chapel." In 1822 the place reports prosperity alike in church and school, and this is the last we hear of it for forty years. About 1824 the Rev. Charles Lowndes (late of Partington) entered upon a pastorate which lasted till his death in 1860; and the church appears all through that period as a subscribing but not an aided church. Then in 1861 "the sum of £40 was entrusted to a committee for the aid of Cheadle and Gatley jointly or severally." Gatley received £10 both for this and the next two years. In 1863 the church (now reduced to eight persons) sought the (spiritual) aid of the North Cheshire Rural Mission, the result being "sundry efforts" to lift church and school out of their deep depression. A series of quarterly services,<sup>3</sup> for example, was inaugurated on April 10th

<sup>1</sup> I owe the particulars as to Mr. Moore, &c., to the kindness of Mr. Maskery.

<sup>2</sup> Taking in—besides Gatley—Cheadle Hulme, Long Lane, Heyhead, Hale Barnes, &c.

<sup>3</sup> For these services Mr. MacWilliam, of Altrincham, Secretary of the Union, made himself responsible.

(1864), when the chapel was filled and the Lord's Supper administered for the first time for months.

Presently, moreover, alterations in the chapel made it a much more attractive and comfortable place of worship, and an evangelist, Mr. W. C. Davies, was set in charge. By these means the membership went up from 8 to 11, the congregation from 30 to 40 or 50, the Sunday school from 30 to 60. By 1869 the connection with the North Cheshire Rural Mission was dissolved, but the small sub-committee of the Union, which had co-operated with it, still kept the oversight. For this and the next year the Report is "No progress." In 1871 Mr. Davies<sup>1</sup> "ceased to be pastor"; and though the Assembly voted a "sum of money" for Gatley, if the Committee thought well to use it, no help was given. So things remained for some years, inasmuch as "the pulpit was supplied by a gentleman who possessed" a private income. Then in 1878<sup>2</sup> Rev. J. Pinn, of Wootton Bassett, settled, and grants were renewed.

Mr. Pinn undertook "six services a month in the school at Long Lane"; he also visited Cross Acres and Heald Green. A perceptible growth of interest and numbers at these places and at Gatley rewarded his "assiduous labours." His stay, however, was short, and after his removal—to Lostwithiel, in Cornwall—in 1880, the church at Cheadle intervened. It offered<sup>3</sup> to secure for some "energetic man" a fair stipend if the Union would increase its grant. Fixing the stipend at £130 the Union agreed, and on these terms the Rev. A. Moir, of Nottingham Institute, became pastor.

Mr. Moir's ministry extended from 1881 to August 1892, when he removed to Bedworth. Under him the church on the whole did more than maintain its ground—in the midst (we are reminded<sup>4</sup>) of a stationary population and against a rather large Episcopal church energetically worked on somewhat "high principles."<sup>5</sup> After his departure the church, waiving a grant from the Union, handed itself over to the care of a lay pastor, Mr. J. Sterling, of Heaton Moor—by no means to its advantage. He

<sup>1</sup> He had preached "occasionally" at Heald Green, Cross Acres, and Sharston.

<sup>2</sup> This year the church was transferred from the Bowdon to the Stockport district.

<sup>3</sup> From the 1884 Report we find that the offer came from a "friend" at Cheadle.

<sup>4</sup> In 1886.

<sup>5</sup> In 1882 the chapel was renovated at a cost of £290—a family long connected with the place presented a new organ costing £200—£118 was spent in 1884 on new class-rooms, &c. "Indeed, this little church has raised about £200 per annum for special purposes during the last three years" (Report of 1885).







TINTWISTLE.



CHADKIRK.



HATHERLOW (OLD) CHAPEL.

was succeeded in 1896 by the Rev. Harper Riley. From 1897 to 1900 the church was again a beneficiary of the Union. In 1903 Mr. Riley resigned, and in April following (1904) Gatley reappeared as a "new case." The congregations, says the Report, number about 60; there is a good and well-staffed Sunday school; there is a number of earnest and enthusiastic workers; and there is a prospect of the neighbourhood becoming more and more "residential" as soon as the London and North-Western Railway opens its loop-line close by. It is, therefore, of great importance that the place should be well tended. To this end the Rev. J. R. Macnamara (of York Street, Dublin) was invited to take charge for two years. His reputation as a preacher and pastor encouraged the Union to grant £50 annually towards a salary of £150 to be guaranteed by the church and its friends. So far the experiment has been amply justified. There are signs that this "old cause" is renewing its youth, and is on the way to a degree of prosperity never yet reached. The great drawback, in view of expanding opportunities, seems to be in the situation and character of the present chapel. Enterprise, shown in securing at least the site for a larger building better placed, may make all the difference between taking, or missing, that tide in the affairs of churches—no less than of men—which leads on to fortune.

*Grants.*—Besides helping largely to sustain Mr. Chesters (1813-24). 1861-63, £10 annually. 1864-68, £20 annually. 1869-71, £30 (if minister settles and works in adjacent villages).

1878-80, £25. 1882-83, £30 (if minister receive £130). 1884-85, £30 (if pastoral work done at Long Lane). 1886-92, £25 (ditto).

1896-1900, £25.

1904, £25. 1905-06, £50.

### Hatherlow.

Hatherlow "lies in the most picturesque part of the east horn of Cheshire, at the foot of hills which branch like ribs from the backbone of England; and about eight miles from the Derbyshire Peak." Apart from chapel and school, it is just a cluster of houses belonging to the township of Bredbury, on the one hand, and within a stone's throw of Romiley, on the other—townships which have a population at the present time of about 8000—continually on the increase mainly through the inflow of residents from Manchester, seven and a half miles away by rail. Hatherlow means Heather Low (or Hill), and points back to a time when the little slope, so called, rose upon a wide stretch of moorland. In a lovely valley to the south, watered by the Goyt (a main

tributary of the Mersey), a quaint, timber-ribbed, black and white chapel lies in sheltered seclusion. As early as 1535 we find mention of it as a "dearn and deavly chappel called Chad Chappel." At that time it was Roman Catholic, and marks the site of "some Monkish cell" much earlier. A hundred years later it appears as Protestant and Puritan—a change vouched for by the fact that Adam Martindale, of Gorton, and afterwards of Rostherne, declined an invitation (about 1646) to settle there.

We meet with it next as one of the places, probably the chief, where the Rev. John Jones, M.A., of Christ College, Cambridge—a man "of the Congregational persuasion, but of a Catholic spirit"—carried on a ministry of widespread influence. His work at Chadkirk followed on what seems to have been a short incumbency at Tarporley (in Cheshire), which he resigned; and was taken up again after his ejection from Mellor (or possibly Charlesworth) Chapel in 1660. He died in July 1671. Though often preaching at Chadkirk, he was not its minister. This office was held by Mr. Thomas Norman—a successor to Martindale at Gorton—who came to Chadkirk in 1652; and is described as "minister of the word of God at Chadkirk" at his death in March 1667.

There are very scanty notices of the place for the next twenty years. Such as there are betoken a *formal* attachment to the Established Church. Thus William Heginbotham, clerk, is ordered by the Bishop to obtain admission to the cure in 1671; and Richard Goolden (or Golden) is mentioned as curate of Chadkirk in 1686. But the immediate successor of Goolden was Gamaliel Jones, son of John. *He* was no Conformist, and when he is found taking instant advantage of the Toleration Act to license the "meeting-place, Chadkirk" (July 16, 1689), it is evident that his people were as Nonconformist as himself. After a training at Frankland's Academy (from April 1679), Mr. Jones received ordination, in January 1688, at the hands of the Lancashire "classis" in Warrington, and then became pastor of the Chadkirk congregation till his death in 1717. He was one of the originators of the Cheshire classis (or voluntary association of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, 1690–1745), was its first secretary, and always a notable figure in its proceedings. In 1703 his congregation left Chadkirk, which fell into disuse and decay for many years. They are said to have been "turned out," and the circumstances seem to imply this. For a time they worshipped at several "licensed" houses in companies. Then, in December 1705, a piece of land was leased for a thousand years at Hatherlow, and upon it a "handsome and spacious place

of worship" was opened in October 1706. It was the central, and even the only Nonconformist congregation in a wide district, and is noted in the Evans MS. (*circa* 1717) as numbering about 300, inclusive of 10 gentlemen, 39 tradesmen, 26 yeomen, and 8 labourers.

During some years before his death Mr. Jones had been assisted by his son John, also a student of Franklands Academy. On him the choice of the congregation fell as the one best fitted to fill his father's place; and a ministry sustained in honour and effectiveness for forty-five years sealed the wisdom of the choice. Thus father, son, and grandson served the same "cause" for nearly one hundred years. Mr. Jones kept a register of the baptisms performed by him—873 in all—and his last entry is on August 27, 1762. The next—on July 5, 1763—is by his successor, Rev. Charles Shepley, who did good work, and left behind extensive and learned MS. notes of a work on "Jewish Antiquities," which he did not live to complete. He closed his life and ministry on December 27, 1769, aged thirty-three.

In 1764 a manse was built for him, or for any other "*Protestant Dissenting minister* who should thereafter stately preach in the said chapel," one of several signs that the church, though practically was not yet theoretically and strictly Independent.

In the spring of 1770 the Rev. James Burgess settled at Hatherlow, frankly preferring it to Stockport, on the ground that the congregation was "far larger" and offered more scope. He returned to his former charge at Whitworth, near Rochdale, in 1776, because of "his opposition to those who were for introducing musical instruments, and to those that were of the free will." He was a writer of no mean reputation in his day, and seems to have been a very impressive preacher, with more than a touch of humour at times. In a letter written by him in his eightieth year (May 1804) he declared that the instrumental music question "threw the congregation into confusion." Whether this was so or not, bad days followed his removal.

The next minister, Rev. George Booth (1777–85), was not of the sort to improve things; nor did the Rev. John Meldrum, who settled in January 1786, though a respectable author, a thoughtful preacher, and a good man, prove much of a blessing. He outstayed his usefulness; and when he died, in April 1814, the membership of the church had sunk to five persons.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yet in his earlier days at Hatherlow he seems to have been a leading spirit in the county. It was he, for example, who constituted the church at Middlewich in 1797, and he was one of the twelve who formed the Association of Congregational Ministers in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire at Tintwistle, August 22, 1798.

This very "feebleness" attracted Mr. James Potter, a student of Rotherham Academy, who first preached at Hatherlow in June 1815; and, at the conclusion of his course, entered on the pastorate with all a youth's enthusiasm. He found, however, that he had more than "feebleness" to encounter. "The leading people were strongly tainted with Socinianism." He, therefore, suddenly resigned in September 1818, to "the regretful surprise of the majority." His "memorial" is the Sunday school started by him in May 1817. A year later it contained upwards of 300 children; fifty years later, at the "Jubilee"—to which Mr. Potter (then still living) was invited—it numbered 410, and the average has seldom been less.

On January 3, 1819, the Rev. Thomas Bennett, of Duckinfield, began what proved to be just the pastorate required. Kindly, devout, earnest, and full of common-sense, his influence steadily rallied the place to something of its former prosperity. He stayed till his death in October 1842.

A man of fascinating character and unusual gifts succeeded him. This was Mr. Thomas Coward (trained partly in Bull's Academy, Newport-Pagnell), whose brief ministry of seven years (1843-50) was charged with the best influences, intellectual and social, as well as spiritual. One of his first acts was to reconstitute the church on a basis more simple theologically and more definitely congregational. This was done on April 4, 1844, when the Rev. R. Calvert, of Hyde, preached, and twenty-three persons subscribed their names on the new roll. Then, on the same occasion, these twenty-three repeated the invitation to Mr. Coward to become minister, and he accepted. It is clear that Mr. Coward was not content with a general call from the congregation, or seat-holders, as would seem to have been the custom, and so insisted upon the Congregational "rule," which locates the right of electing a pastor in the church only.

Before the end of his second year the foundation-stone of a new chapel (the present beautiful building) was laid, the old having become too small. The opening services took place on 19th June 1846, well-known leaders like Dr. Halley, Dr. Vaughan, and James Griffin, of Manchester, being prominent. In a short time the chapel (with seats for 550), was filled, and prosperity was at the flood when Mr. Coward's state of health compelled him to resign. He preached his farewell sermons on 12th May 1850, and never preached regularly again.<sup>1</sup> On May 1851 the Rev. William Urwick, M.A., fresh from Lancashire College,

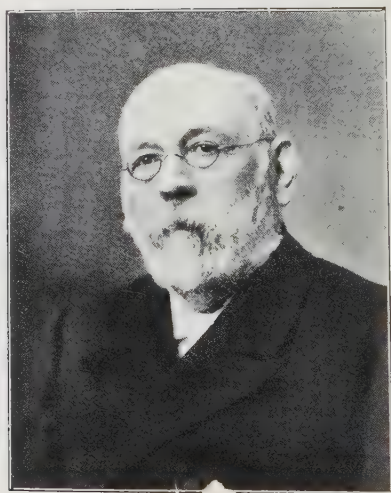
<sup>1</sup> He died in 1895, after many years of business in Manchester and quiet life in Bowdon.







Rev. W. URWICK.



Rev. T. ROBINSON.

entered upon his remarkable pastorate. He was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at New College from 1874 to 1877, and afterwards pastor of Spicer Street Congregational Church, St. Albans; but his best work was done as a pastor for twenty-three years at Hatherlow. No one not intimately acquainted with the place can have any idea of the love and reverence which he won for himself during those years of quiet faithfulness. His name was one to conjure with up to the day of his death. None could draw such audiences or collections, whenever he came for the Sunday school anniversary or other special occasion. People have been heard to say that they "would sooner *see* him in the pulpit if he said nothing than hear the most eloquent of preachers." He is still a fragrant memory, and is never likely to be forgotten. The chief event in the external history of his time was doubtless the addition made to the old chapel, by which its capacity for Sunday school purposes was more than doubled. This took place in 1862-63, by way of celebrating the bicentenary of the "noble 2000"—in connection with which, also, he prepared his "History of Nonconformity in Cheshire."

He preached farewell sermons on 13th September 1874. On the second Sunday of 1875 the Rev. George Colborne, M.A., Ph.D., late of Reading, began his ministry—very brief, but by no means barren or unfruitful, as some even yet bear witness. He removed to Gosport in September 1877, and in the following July was succeeded by the Rev. George S. Cheeseman of Lancashire College. After seven years of strenuous service he accepted an invitation (in October 1885) to Melbourne Street Congregational Church, Stalybridge. He earned warm gratitude by his successful efforts to clear off an old mortgage-debt on the chapel of over £800, which the church had good reason to think of as long since paid, and had quite forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

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The present pastorate, that of Dr. Powicke, began in November 1886. Few striking incidents have occurred; but we may mention the erection in 1887 of a new minister's house (called the "Parsonage," for distinction from the old "Manse" which cannot be sold or alienated), and alterations in the chapel by enlargement of the organ in 1893, at a cost of £300, and the provision of some eighty new sittings in the front gallery. In 1895, moreover, the 250th anniversary of the "cause" was celebrated by a series of special services in the spring and a bazaar

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Oliver Heyworth, of Oakwood Hall, a very generous supporter, had incurred the debt for the church and fully meant to secure it from all liability, but died without actually doing so.

in the autumn. This year, again, the bicentenary year of the old chapel, a bazaar, mainly with the object of renovating the school, has been held in the first week of October (realizing more than £900), and occasion has been taken by the pastor to set before the people, from time to time, the really inspiring story of their past and the obligations it puts upon them.

### Woodley.

The church here originated in 1864. The first services were held in what had been a Wesleyan meeting-house in Mill Lane, purchased by a Hatherlow member, Mr. Isaac Cocks, and let at a nominal rent for the purposes of a school and chapel. Special opening sermons were preached, on April 24, by the Rev. J. T. Woodhouse, of Stockport, and Rev. J. Wilson, of Charlesworth. The place soon had a good congregation, and drew its usual weekly supplies from Manchester lay preachers, though after January 1866 these alternated with Lancashire College junior students. There was a Sunday school before there was a church—the former dating from April 17, 1864; the latter from March 20, 1867. The terms of the Trust constitute the church a strictly Independent one, without any specific relation to Hatherlow. As a matter of fact, however, the relation, on the whole, has been increasingly cordial, and for more than twenty years, since March 1882, the two churches have been united in the recognition of one and the same pastor. In 1876 the congregation removed from Mill Lane to a new school-chapel in George Lane—built at a cost of £791 and capable of seating 250 persons. The opening services extended from Wednesday, November 1, to Sunday, November 12; the preachers being Rev. Alexander Thomson, of Manchester, Rev. Thomas Robinson, of Hyde, Rev. Dr. Colborne, and Rev. Elkanah Armitage, of Oldham. A debt of £209 still remaining was cleared in 1885. The preachers have usually been, as at first, laymen or students; but from 1878 to 1882 the place had a lay pastor, Mr. Frederick Thompson, of Patricroft; from March 1895 to March 1896 it again had a lay pastor, Mr. William Parkinson, of Cheadle; and at the present time it has a third lay pastor, Mr. C. H. Grimshaw, who took charge in October 1903.

The connection of Woodley with the County Union has been varied. An application to the District Committee for a grant, on June 30, 1873, was met by a recommendation to seek

a union with Hatherlow on certain very definite terms. A second application, in March 1874, evoked the resolution "that this meeting does not see its way to recommend any grant to Woodley under present circumstances." A third, in June 1876, was backed up by Rev. W. Champness, of Stockport, so effectively that the District Committee unanimously recommended the Union to make a grant of £25. The Union granted £20; but added a donation of £10 from "the surplus fund of last year." In March 1877 the application for £25 was renewed, and the District Committee again recommended it, but only after "much comment and question." The Union granted £20 this time, without a donation. In March 1879 the Committee were persuaded to recommend a grant of £35 if "it be found that the funds of the Union will bear the additional burden." The "depressed state of trade" occasioned this enlarged request, and the Union was sympathetic. Its funds, however, were inadequate, and Woodley had to be content with the usual £20. At this amount the grant remained for the next ten years. After Mr. Thompson's removal, in 1882, the church came directly under the direction of the Hatherlow minister, Rev. G. Cheeseman, and it was agreed that £10 of the grant should go to him. This arrangement continued with Mr. Cheeseman's successor; but in 1889 the latter offered to give up his moiety on condition that the church was willing to come off the Union funds, and to this it consented, nor has it since found cause to regret the decision. Both numerically and financially the place is in a prosperous state—with a church membership of 46 and a Sunday school of 163; with a fund, too, rapidly growing, for the purpose of buying out a heavy chief-rent, and even of erecting a new chapel at some not, perhaps, far distant date.

*Grants.*—1877-89, £20 per annum.

### Hazel Grove.

Bullock Smithy, alias Hazel Grove, is first mentioned as an aided "cause" in 1829, but as one which had been "more or less connected with the Union for several years." The Union had, in fact, "voted £50 towards the support of an agent" in 1823.<sup>1</sup> This amount was supplemented by liberal contributions from friends at Stockport. For two years the Rev. Theophilus Davies

<sup>1</sup> Urwick, p. 312.



was the agent, and then the Rev. Samuel Simon. Mr. Davies held services "in an inconvenient room and at a high rent." Mr. Simon, as a consequence of Mr. Davies's labours, succeeded to "a very commodious chapel." The place, it is noted, "is strictly an itinerant station, the full allowance (£70) per annum being paid to the minister, and the proceeds of the station being paid over to the Treasurer of the Union." Besides Hazel Grove, Mr. Simon itinerated between Woodford, Worth and Half Green. "My general course of labours," he writes, "is preaching three times on the Sabbath, and I am engaged three evenings in one week and four in the other. It frequently takes one two days to visit the sick, there being no other minister in the village or neighbourhood." Mr. Simon removed to New Mills, and the agent who succeeded him, Mr. Williams, reports (in 1834) that, in March 1833, a church was formed, consisting of six persons; and that his sphere of labour included Woodford, Worth, and High Lane. Mr. Healey, his successor after 1838, "operated" in Woodford, Heaviley, Gillbent, and Danbrook. It is interesting to hear that a special hindrance to his success was this—that "Hazel Grove has suffered more than most places from the efforts of the Chartist;" but there was progress, nevertheless. In 1842 the Report is that church and congregations are growing, that the Sunday school contains 140 children, that the teachers are not only attentive to their proper duties, but assiduous distributors of tracts to 190 families in the village and neighbourhood, and that out of "the abundance of their poverty" the people have raised upwards of £60 for all purposes, including "interest of debt on the chapel."

Our next information<sup>1</sup> is not till seven years later, and is to the effect that Mr. Healey is still perseveringly at work and that the chapel debt has been extinguished. In June 1849 Mr. Healey resigned, and a sign that things had gone amiss is the fact that in the following November a *new* church was formed consisting of thirteen members. The Report of 1850 says that the Rev. W. Crease, late of Wilmslow, has been "supplying for the last eleven Sabbaths, and seems the most likely man to revive the cause." The church, therefore, was anxious to invite him—with the Union's approval—and did so. His acceptance of the call created bright hopes, which, alas, "were cut off as in an hour;" for before he could take up the work he was "called home to his rest." Its next choice was Rev. J. Yates, of Manchester, whose ministry lasted from 1852 to 1859.

A curious observation is the following, in the Report of 1860 :

<sup>1</sup> Report, 1849.

"For three-quarters of the past year the church at Hazel Grove has not been receiving any aid from the Union, a fact due chiefly to the resignation of the pastor, which somehow developed the energies of the people"—so that they have been able not only to pay all supplies and other expenses, but also to pay off a balance of £20 due to the treasurer. The belief is expressed "that there is also a much more healthy feeling in the church" which has had, on the whole, a troubled life, like that of "a man with a weak constitution." The next minister, Rev A. H. Lowe, did not settle till 1862<sup>1</sup> and was gone before April 1864. The Rev. J. B. Dixon, who followed in 1866,<sup>2</sup> stayed till 1869. No grant was made, or asked for, during his time or Mr. Lowe's. The church was in a poor way.<sup>3</sup> For the next four years it had no pastor, and then (1873) it appears as a church united with Wellington Road, under the co-pastorate of the Revs. Absalom Clark and William Champness. The connection came to an end in 1878, being "no longer feasible."

But how salutary had been its effect may be gathered from the fact that there was now a church of 41 members, an evening congregation of 200, and a Sunday school of 200; as also from the fact that the people were prepared to pay a minister of their own £150—if the Union contributed £50. On this understanding a call was given to the Rev. S. Hinds, late of Limerick, who began his work in February 1879. If we follow the Reports we learn in 1880 that everything is in a "flourishing condition," and the grant of £50 is "cheerfully recommended." In 1881 we learn that the improvement continues, but in order to be maintained "a chapel and school must be provided immediately;" for "the present chapel is a poor building, hidden away in a back street, while the school, if it can be called by that name, is little more than a very bad vestry—a room joining up to the chapel, small, comfortless, and hideously ugly." By dint of unflagging exertions prolonged through nearly three years, minister and people attained their object. "A new chapel," says the Report of 1884, "has been opened, and there is every prospect that the debt still owing will be met by a bazaar about to be held." It is noted, too, as a sign of general prosperity, that £5 less is "asked for than was received last year."

Before April 1885 the chapel had been paid for, and the intention is "to purchase an organ and to adapt the old chapel

<sup>1</sup> After April.

<sup>2</sup> March 14, 1866.—Mr. Wilson reported that Rev. — Dickson had settled at Hazel Grove; no grant asked for (Minute of District Committee).

<sup>3</sup> March 22, 1869.—On application for £30, Mr. (Absalom) Clark moved and Mr. Woodhouse seconded that a committee of investigation be appointed.

to school purposes." To a renewal of the grant of £45 the condition is annexed that the church shall pay the rent of a suitable house for the pastor. At the end of two years, the same grant being still requested, the Committee expressed its opinion that the church—"situated as it is in the midst of a large population and being free from debt"—ought no longer to be dependent, and reduced the grant to £40. A year later (1887) the Committee hinted that the church had been thinking rather too much of bricks and mortar. "Where buildings are in anything like fair condition self-support should come before expansion." At any rate, the time has come to insist that unless a very decided step towards independence is at once taken the grant may be withdrawn. In consequence £5 less was asked for in 1889 and £7 less in 1890, with the explanation that still less would have sufficed but for a debt of £100 in respect of "a boundary wall and other improvements." Next year tells of a manse provided for the minister at a cost of £550—repaid, "saving £50," by 1892.

During the previous ten years, it is said, the church has acquired property to the value of over £4000. Not yet, however, is it quite prepared to go alone. £20 is asked and £15 granted. But at length, in 1893, the final step was taken. "In a letter received by the secretary—signed by the pastor and church secretary—the deacons express their great indebtedness to the Union for the aid which they acknowledge has been generously rendered for the last thirteen years," and their resolution henceforth to "carry forward the work without help." Hazel Grove has been indeed a debtor to the fostering care of the Union; and might be cited as a typical instance of what it has done to help struggling "causes" through just those critical periods when "the heart is weak and all the wheels of being slow."

*Grants.*—Hazel Grove (or Bullock Smithy): 1827-41, £70 per annum (during this period the place was an itinerancy, sustained by the Union, and giving back what it could raise in collections, &c., e.g. £20, 15s. 2d. for 1827-28. £21, 11s. 1½d. for 1832-33. £38, 4s. for 1838-39. £24, 5s. 8½d. for 1840-41).

Then *Grants* (with intervals) are continuous: 1846, £38. 1847, £10. 1848, £10. 1849-50, £30 per annum. 1851, £35. 1852, £25.

1855-59, £40 per annum. 1860, £7, 10s.

1869, £30 (if approved by special committee).

1878, £50. 1879, £45 or £50. 1880-83, £50. 1884, £45. 1885, £45 (on condition that the church pays rent and rates of suitable house for pastor). 1886, £45. 1887-88, £40. 1889, £35. 1890, £28. 1891, £25. 1892, £15.

### Hollingworth.

In 1839 a branch Sunday school was started by the Tintwistle Church at Hollingworth. Its success and "the powerful claims of the large population" round about led to the room being used for preaching also. Local friends guaranteed "a liberal sum for that purpose," and their application to the Union for a small grant in aid met with a ready response. It would have liked to plant an "agent" of its own in so promising a place, but could only for the present supplement the praiseworthy "exertions of the Tintwistle Church."<sup>1</sup>

Before 1849, however, an agent was appointed, who had charge of Mottram, Wooley Bridge, and Padfield, as well as Hollingworth. The Derbyshire Union contributed something to his support; and his "itinerancy" was under the superintendence of a Committee drawn from "the churches at Tintwistle, Charlesworth, and Glossop."<sup>2</sup> Mr. T. Davies was the name of the agent. He preached on Sundays twice at Hollingworth, and once, in the afternoon, at "the New Chapel," Mottram; also, on Tuesday evenings, at Wooley Bridge, and on Thursdays at Padfield. The grant from the Cheshire Union was £15, and Mr. Coward, of Hatherlow, who made a visit of inspection, as secretary of the Northern District Committee, testified his "confidence that no grant" was likely to turn out more fruitful. This was in 1849. Two years later Padfield and Wooley Bridge have dropped out; but at each of the two Cheshire places—Hollingworth and Mottram—a church has been formed.<sup>3</sup> The Rev. A. Bell, of Mount Mellick, Ireland, was now (1851) the agent, and is reported as engaged not only thrice on Sundays but on almost every evening in the week, either in preaching or with Bible classes. Early in 1857 Mr. Bell "removed to another charge," and the two churches united in a "unanimous request to Mr. Harwood to take the oversight." The "interest" had declined, especially at Mottram, and Mr. Harwood found work "trying and depressing at first." But there was "a spirit of union abroad," and other good signs which made him hopeful. Alas! there soon came a withering "blight," due less, says the Report of 1859, to "God's providences" than to "men's weaknesses"<sup>4</sup>—so much so that it was "determined to recommend that a grant be no longer made to these two places."

The chief seat of the trouble was perhaps Hollingworth. At

<sup>1</sup> Report of 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Report of 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Hollingworth began with fifteen, Mottram with four members.

<sup>4</sup> Not the pastor's particularly.



any rate in 1860 Mottram is conjoined with Newton for a grant, and Mr. Harwood has abandoned Hollingworth. This arrangement did not last long; and in 1864 Hollingworth and Mottram reappear in union under two evangelists, Messrs. Adamson and Eckersley, and the outlook is so encouraging that the Union bestows a joint grant of £50.

Mr. and Mrs. Midwood are named as the persons most to be thanked for this better state of things, and it was their generosity which for just one year (1866) made a grant unnecessary. But Mr. Midwood left the neighbourhood in 1867,<sup>1</sup> and the two places again called for help. Presently the evangelists also left (no doubt because in Mr. Midwood they had lost their mainstay), and their going seems to have been a signal for the churches to separate and take each its own way. Mottram remained in connection with the Union till 1874, and during this period received £15 or £10 yearly towards its supplies. As to Hollingworth, after a brief pastorate by Mr. Daniels (1869-70), the Rev. T. Hughes, of Lancashire College, became minister (in 1871), and the church entered upon a new life.

Mr. Hughes' first concern was to replace the old (school) building with a more convenient and commodious place of worship. This was accomplished in 1873, a church made to seat 500 persons being opened in December of that year "without one shilling of debt."<sup>2</sup> School premises, comprising eight classrooms besides a large room fitted for 600 scholars, were opened at the same time. It was a great achievement, and justified Mr. Hughes in the expression of his belief that it marked "the dawn of a new era for Congregationalism in the neighbourhood." For the next fourteen years—until in 1888 the church declared itself self-supporting—its record, as reflected in the Reports, is, on the whole, a record of steady, unflinching work carried on often amid great difficulties, such as arise from fluctuations of trade and population. There were occasional murmurs, on the part of the Union and "Committees of Inquiry," to make sure how far the church was doing all it could, particularly in the matter of its minister's stipend; but there has never been any doubt on the point of Mr. Hughes' personal devotedness and the debt of the church to him, and the words of the Report of 1876 may be

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Midwood exerted a lasting and still-remembered influence for good:—His "short residence in the neighbourhood (1863-67) proved most helpful. His Christian devotion and enthusiasm and the noble and self-denying efforts of his family roused a drooping cause, and proved an untold blessing to the village. His name is beloved and revered by all the survivors of that generation."—Extract from Bazaar Handbook (1896). Mr. G. S. Wood and Mr. Paull (of Cheadle) are his sons-in-law.

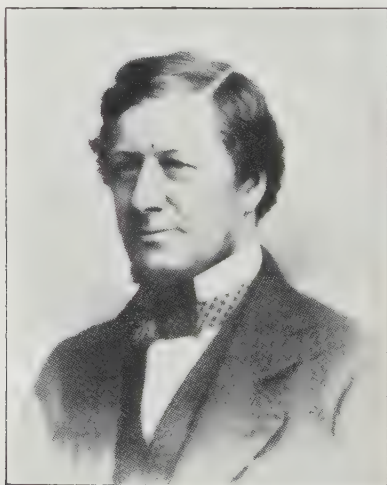
<sup>2</sup> The cost is given as £3800, and J. W. MacMaster, Esq., is mentioned as a specially munificent contributor.







Mr. Alderman LEES.



Mr. F. MIDWOOD.

quoted as still true—that Hollingworth “is one of those cases which show how much the success of our work as a Union is due to the worth and capacity of men who are over the several churches ; and how little, without such men, mere votes of money, however lavish, can effect.”

This year (1906) the Union may be said to have endorsed this judgment by the election of Mr. Hughes to its chairmanship.

*Grants :—*

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Hollingworth, 1839 (amount not stated). | Mottram and Hollingworth, 1867, £25. |
| Hollingworth, 1849, £15.                | Mottram, 1868, £20.                  |
| Hollingworth, 1850, £20.                | Hollingworth, 1868, £20.             |
| Hollingworth and Mottram, 1851, £20.    | Mottram, 1869, £20.                  |
| Hollingworth and Mottram, 1852, £30.    | Hollingworth, 1869, £30.             |
| Hollingworth and Mottram, 1856, £30.    | Hollingworth and Mottram, 1870, £40. |
| Mottram, 1857, £30.                     | Hollingworth, 1871, £20.             |
| Hollingworth and Mottram, 1858-59, £30. | Mottram, 1871, £20.                  |
| Mottram and Newton, 1860-61, £40.       | Hollingworth, 1872, £40.             |
| Mottram and Newton, 1862, £20.          | Mottram, 1872, £15.                  |
| Mottram, 1862, £10.                     | Hollingworth, 1873, £40.             |
| Mottram, 1863-64, £15.                  | Mottram, 1873, £10.                  |
| Mottram and Hollingworth, 1865, £50.    | Hollingworth, 1874-77, £40.          |
|   | Hollingworth, 1878, £35.             |
|   | Hollingworth, 1879, £30 or £35.      |
|   | Hollingworth, 1880-85, £35.          |
|   | Hollingworth, 1886, £25.             |
|   | Hollingworth, 1887, £20.             |

NEWTON, HYDE.

“Our brother Bennett, of Duckinfield, has, in pursuance of a resolution passed at our last meeting, opened a place of preaching at the neighbouring hamlet of Newton, where he has been very well attended.” So says the second Report, November 1809. Then comes silence till 1850, when we learn that £10 had been voted in the previous year towards opening a preaching-place, and that “some friends in the neighbourhood consider the time has fully come to set up a permanent and effective mission” in this “fearfully neglected neighbourhood.”

Accordingly, a sum, not to exceed £40, was placed at the discretion of a sub-committee for this purpose, and a missionary agent, Rev. E. Dillon, late of Wexford, was engaged. But no “room” for the services could be obtained, and he had to confine himself to the distributing of tracts, &c. This difficulty was surmounted for a time in 1851-52, and services took place every Sabbath day. The mission, however, seems to have come to little or nothing ; for in 1859 it is suggested that the Union would be well advised to expend the money it has resolved to withdraw

from Mottram and Hollingworth on Mottram and Newton, the latter presenting a more necessitous "sphere of aggressive labour." Thereupon Mr. Harwood, who had previously worked Mottram and Hollingworth, now undertook to work Newton and Mottram. But the difficulty at Newton was again that of obtaining a "room," and it was resolved (August 1859)—perhaps to quicken inquiries—that the grant should not be renewed unless, within six months, the desired opening was found. A year later, it is said, the labours of Mr. Harwood at Newton have, as before, been limited to house to house visitation, neither a room for worship, nor accommodation for cottage-meetings having been obtained.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Union was loth to act on its avowed decision, and voted £40 for another six months (from April 1861) in the hope that things might take a turn. The hope was not fulfilled, and Mr. Harwood resigned (October 1861). A grant of £10 was then made to Mottram alone (1862) "in aid of the expenses of public worship"; while as to Newton, the Union—still reluctant to give it up—put a considerable sum in the hands of a sub-committee consisting of the pastors and deacons of the churches in Hyde, and empowered them, in conjunction with its own Executive, to engage another missionary if they could secure a "suitable room." Once more, however, this "bar to all progress" proved too much, and the field was abandoned.

### Union Street, Hyde.

In the year 1811 some persons, to whom the "doctrine" current at the old Presbyterian Chapel, Gee Cross, was unacceptable, hired a room in Cross Street, near the centre of the town, and induced the Rev. Thomas Bennett, then minister of Providence Chapel, Duckinfield, to hold a fortnightly service. He preached for the first time on 30th May. In March 1814 permission to use the room was withdrawn, and the services were transferred to the house of Mr. James Gee, in Hyde Lane, opposite the end of Union Street. There seems to have been considerable opposition to the new movement, and a statement made by "Brother Bennett" to the Cheshire Union at its annual meeting,<sup>2</sup> in April, ascribes it to the Unitarians. The Union showed itself sympathetic, and hoped Mr. Bennett's neighbours would respond liberally to his appeal for help towards a new chapel. This was opened in the following September by Mr. Roby, of Manchester, and Mr. Reynolds, of Chester.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Great disappointment, too, at Mottram; the Sunday school, for example, having become extinct.

<sup>2</sup> Held at Duckinfield.

<sup>3</sup> Its site was that of the Mechanics' Institute.

"The place was supplied every Sabbath evening by Mr. Bennett, or other ministers in the neighbourhood;" by 1816 (according to the Union's Report of that year) "already a Sunday school, well attended and cheerfully supported," had been established. In a year or two, "principally by the assistance of lay-preachers from Manchester," two services on the Sunday became possible. Before long the "small chapel" had to be enlarged by the addition of galleries. This took place in 1822, when the reopening services (on 31st March) were conducted by Dr. Clunie, of Leaf Square, Manchester, and Mr. Sutcliffe, of Ashton.<sup>1</sup> Then on Sunday, 19th May, their old friend Mr. Bennett, now of Hatherlow, came over and expounded to the people the nature of a Congregational Church, whereupon eleven persons subscribed a "covenant" and entered into church fellowship. Shortly after, the infant church obtained its first pastor—the Rev. W. Oram, of Frodingham, who came and went within eighteen months—"settling" on July 21, 1822, and resigning on October 25, 1823. He removed to Wallingford. He was succeeded in July 1826, nearly three years later, by the Rev. Joseph Massey, a student from Airedale College. But, meanwhile, the congregations had so increased as to necessitate a larger chapel. The old one, therefore, was taken down and a larger one built on the same site—"capable of accommodating 400 persons." It was opened on May 15, 1825.

Mr. Massey remained till April 1835, and in his time (1831) the church added to the chapel a building<sup>2</sup> for the Sunday school.

His successor, the Rev. Edward Edwards, late of Garstang, held the pastorate from September 4, 1836, to April 4, 1841, and won for himself this simple but eloquent testimony: "He gave love and won it in return."

One event of his brief ministry is noted—viz., the opening of a branch school in Joel Lane, Gee Cross.

On July 28, 1841, the Rev. R. Calvert, of Upper Mill, Saddleworth, took charge and held it till within a week or two of his death on Christmas Eve, 1856.<sup>3</sup> His remarkable energy and devotedness gave the church a great forward impetus. "In nine months a new chapel was talked about." On Good Friday, 1843, the foundation-stone was laid, and by the first week in November the chapel in Union Street was opened by Dr. Raffles, of Liver-

<sup>1</sup> See *Evangelical Magazine*, 1822, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Greatly enlarged in 1850. "There were upwards of 400 children" in the school as early as 1828 (Slate's "Brief History of the Lancashire Union," p. 50).

<sup>3</sup> About two hours before the end he "breathed out" to one of his deacons, "Don't forget poor Cheshire" (Report of 1857). He is buried in Hatherlow Chapel-yard.



pool. Mr. Pugsley and Mr. Parsons (of York) also took part in the inaugural services. A second school at Newton, weekly cottage meetings in different parts of the district, prayer-meetings for all, and special prayer-meetings for young men—these were the signs and also the cause of unusual prosperity. Nor was it permanently checked by the “split” which led to the building of Zion Chapel, Gee Cross, in 1847. The vacant places thus made were, we are told, “speedily filled, and unoccupied seats were few and far between.” Mr. Calvert’s successor was Mr. Gavin, a student from Lancashire College, who settled in January 1858, and removed to Harrogate in 1863. Another Lancashire College student followed—Rev. Thomas Robinson, B.A., a notable name in the annals of the County Union. He was its secretary from 1871 to 1885. In the latter year, when he removed to Colchester, he was also its Chairman, and at the close of his address became the recipient of a draft for £100, along with “a resolution” which was ordered to be engrossed and signed by the Chairman (T. Rigby, Esq.), secretary (Rev. J. W. Paull, M.A.) and treasurer (G. Stanley Wood, Esq.). “Characterised by strong common-sense, unvarying kindness, a manly straightforwardness, sterling Christian integrity, he has always discharged his duties with the greatest possible efficiency”—so runs the resolution, and perhaps one may be permitted to add that Mr. Robinson’s “Reports,” apart from other qualities, were written in a style which makes them almost literature.

Incidents of his ministry were the repewing of the area of the chapel at a cost of £500; the erection of new schools at a cost of nearly £4000—all paid before his departure; and the building of a manse.

Mr. Robinson was minister from August 1864 to January 1885. Rev. H. J. Just, his successor, came from Kirkstall just a year later, January 1886, and stayed till 1895. He then settled at Oak Street, Accrington. The Rev. John Gascoigne, from Chesterfield, who followed went to Zion Church, Wakefield, in 1899. The present minister is the Rev. Joseph Ferguson, B.A., B.D., from Greenhill Street Church, Manchester, who has held the pastorate since 1900. During the period covered by the last two pastorates the activity of the church on the material side has been continuous. The school has been furnished with a new organ; the chapel organ has been improved and enlarged; the chapel itself has been beautified; the manse has been cleared of debt; and conveniences have been added in the shape of new school-kitchen and lavatory. As to the spiritual side the secretary reports: “The Sunday schools,

including the poor children's mission, are now the largest in Cheshire, containing more than 1100 children and teachers. There is a good teaching staff, and the work is well organised. The membership of the church stands about as high as at any previous period of its history."

It has been pointed out that "Hyde Lane" was a beneficiary of the Union before 1816, when the latter offered "grateful acknowledgments" to the neighbouring ministers and "retired" from the spot. Some time previous to 1822 its "aid" was renewed, since we read in that year's Report "the patronage of the Union has been lately extended to a very important station at Hyde"; but by the time of the next Report (dated April 27, 1829), it had ceased to be asked for. Strange to say, however, the church received "aid" during the same period (1822-28) from the Lancashire Union as well. It was given "in prospect of the people obtaining a settled ministry," *i.e.* before July 1822, and was discontinued when "at the annual meeting of the Union in 1828, it was reported that the church and congregation at Hyde had resolved, in dependence on the blessing of God, henceforth to unite their hearts and hands in making a vigorous effort to support the ministry of the Gospel among them without foreign aid."<sup>1</sup> This was one of several places helped by the Lancashire Union before transference to its Cheshire neighbour—the others being Cross Street (afterwards Sale), Hoylake, and Runcorn. But only Runcorn seems also to have received aid from both at once.

### Zion Chapel, Hyde.

The church bearing this name originated in 1847. What led to its formation is rather obscure; but, though it might be called at first a "split" from Union Street, "the event" (to quote the words of one well acquainted with the history of both churches) "has been overruled by the Divine Head of the Church for the extension of His kingdom; and for years the two have worked heartily and harmoniously together."

The first minister was Rev. Edwin Day, of the Lancashire Independent College—ordained on Friday, April 6, 1849. The ministers taking part were Revs. A. E. Pearce (Pendleton), James Gwyther (Manchester), J. L. Poore (Salford), George Harris (Ringwood), Dr. Vaughan (Principal of the College), Dr. Clunie and James Griffin (Manchester). Dr. Vaughan gave the "charge," and Mr. Griffin preached in the evening.<sup>2</sup> In October 1853 Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Slate's "Brief History of the Lancashire Union," p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, 1849, p. 258.

Day resigned and went out to Australia, where he became minister of a church at Castlemaine.

His successor was Rev. A. Stroyan, whose ordination took place in February 1854. He held the charge till March 1878, when he removed to New Mills. In July of the same year Rev. N. M. Hennesey, a student of Spring Hill College, Birmingham, undertook the pastorate, and was minister till March 1880.<sup>1</sup> He was followed by another Spring Hill student, Rev. D. H. Jacobs, from September 1880 till April 1889. Mr. Jacobs settled in Canada and his place in "Zion" was taken by Rev. William Riley, who occupied it from September 1889 till March 1895—removing then to Heckmondwike. The present minister, Rev. Thomas Nicholas, came from Malpas, and has had the oversight since November 1895.

The external course of the church has been comparatively uneventful. After the enlargement of chapel and school and the addition of a new organ in 1859, little was done in the way of extension or alteration till 1898–99, when the new school—costing about £2600 and accommodating 700 scholars—was taken in hand. Dr. Mackennal, of Bowdon, presided at the opening of this fine building on Good Friday 1899, supported by the Revs. T. Hooper (Ashton), J. Gascoigne (Hyde), and H. Enfield Dowson, B.A. (Gee Cross). The debt upon it was all paid off by 1901.

Among the worthy pillars of the church one may be singled out for mention—Alderman Mycock, J.P. (the only Freeman of Hyde), who was prominent in the founding of the church, was for many years a superintendent of the Sunday school and a deacon, and who died as recently as July of last year (1905). It is not forgotten, too, that Sir John Williams Benn was once a scholar and teacher in the school.

In 1871 and 1872 the church received grants of £10 and £5 respectively towards the support of services at Apethorn.

### Macclesfield.

There were persons here favourable to Independency in the Commonwealth days. Some of these, we read,<sup>2</sup> induced Rev. Ralph Stringer (the "supplanter" in 1649 (?) of Mr. Hardie, incumbent of St. Michael's, whose curate he had been) to invite Mr. Samuel Eaton to come over from Stockport in 1652 and

<sup>1</sup> Now minister of Pitt Street, Sydney, New South Wales.

<sup>2</sup> See Urwick, p. 225.





TOWNLEY STREET, MACCLESFIELD.



BOLLINGTON.



ROE STREET, MACCLESFIELD.



preach at an "exercise." He came, and brought with him, says Henry Newcome,<sup>1</sup> "that busy pregmatistical man," William Barrett, one of Eaton's "elders," who only succeeded, according to Newcome, in making Independency look ridiculous. The town was probably more Episcopalian than anything else, but the Parliamentary interest was uppermost. After Mr. Stringer, therefore, the new minister was Rev. James Bradshaw, a robust Presbyterian of the Newcome type and "a man of incomparable abilities."<sup>2</sup> He was ejected in 1662, and with him Nonconformity passed under the cloud; but it by no means died out. In 1672 (the year of the Indulgence) licenses were granted to Edward Stone and John Whiteacre to hold Presbyterian services in their houses, and to John Garside to officiate as a Presbyterian teacher. In 1681 Mr. Heyhurst, the ejected minister of Leigh, was living at Macclesfield, and was visited, as well as others like-minded, by Henry Newcome. In 1691 Macclesfield, as a sympathetic rather than a convenient centre, was the place chosen for the first meeting (March) of the Association of Cheshire ministers; and one of the first signatories of their "agreement"<sup>3</sup> was Dr. Eaton, who signed himself "J. Eaton at Macclesfield." He was an M.D., but had been trained for the ministry in Frankland's Academy, and was "Congregational in his judgment." That he had a "stated" congregation is evident from the fact that the first question discussed by the classis had reference to some dispute about the gesture used by the minister at the Lord's Supper in "ye congregation at Macclesfield." His chapel, however (the one now in King Edward Street), dates from the following year, 1692. He resigned "some time after" midsummer, 1696.

His successor, 'Rev. Nathanael Scholes, also trained at Frankland's Academy, died October 2, 1702, after a few years' ministry, at the age of thirty-seven.<sup>4</sup> Next came Dr. Holland (Adam Holland, M.D.), from Middlewich, who remained till his death in 1717. He had 500 hearers, of whom 20 were gentlemen, 90 tradesmen, 52 yeomen, and 44 labourers.<sup>5</sup> For thirty-four years (from May 1717) the Rev. Thomas Culcheth was pastor. To him succeeded Rev. B. Street, who died 1764, Rev.

<sup>1</sup> "Autobiography," p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> He received £25, for the half year ending April 27, 1659, from the trustees for maintenance of ministers. See Shaw's "History of Church under the Commonwealth," vol. ii. p. 584.

<sup>3</sup> In 1669 there was a congregation of Nonconformists in Bosley Chapel, also several Nonconformists at Adlington who frequent conventicles in other places (Tenison MS.).

<sup>4</sup> His first charge was Newton Heath. He is highly spoken of in the minutes of the Cheshire classis (*in loco*).

<sup>5</sup> Evans MS. (1717-29).

John Bolt, who removed to Bradwell in 1772, and John Palmer, who resigned in 1779. He had been a student of Harrington Academy, and there imbibed opinions which made him an Arian. This led to a secession on the part of his orthodox hearers, and so to the formation of an Independent church in Townley Street. But not at once. For some years they worshipped with the Wesleyans. Then—when “about the year 1777 it pleased the Lord to open” their “understanding,” “to see more clearly into the doctrines of grace, agreeable to the Assembly’s catechism as collected from God’s Holy Word,” and “to follow the discipline and order of a church of Christ according to what is called Independent or Congregational”—they agreed to invite neighbouring Independent ministers to come to preach to them as often as convenient, or as they “could raise money to bear their expenses.”

The loss of “a principal supporter” compelled them, for some years before 1783, to be content with “private meetings for prayer, singing, and reading God’s word.” Growing more numerous and somewhat less poor they “made another attempt to get ministers to come,”<sup>1</sup> once in a month, once in three weeks, at last once in a fortnight. In 1785, when they “could raise about 12s. or 14s. per week,” they invited “Mr. Gates from London to preach amongst” them. The meeting-place was first a private house, then “a hired room,” then a barn in Mill Street, then an old silk shop.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Gates left at the end of eighteen months, and was succeeded by “a minister from Wolverhampton,” who was instrumental in beginning the erection of a new chapel, but had to leave in consequence of his own misdoings. Not being able to carry on the building themselves they besought the aid of some Manchester gentlemen belonging to Mosley Street Chapel, who carried the thing through, so that, on March 16, 1788, the chapel was opened. Rev. William Maurice, first minister of Orchard Street, Stockport, preached on the occasion. On June 29 their best friend, Rev. Jonathan Scott (“Captain” Scott), then of Drayton, presided at the first administration of the Lord’s Supper. In July Mr. Kingston, a young student of Homerton, became the minister, and stayed till his death in January 1789, aged twenty-one.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Wildbore, recommended by “Captain” Scott, settled a few months later, and was so popular that galleries had to be made “quite

<sup>1</sup> The ministers were from Newcastle, Leek, Congleton, and Gatley.

<sup>2</sup> With several other places; driven, in fact, hither and thither, by the prejudice of the town.

<sup>3</sup> He was buried in the chapel. It is said that he came from Congleton, which seems to mean that Congleton was his home.

round the chapel." Under a mistaken impression that his services were no longer acceptable he suddenly resigned, to the boundless grief of his congregation. For the next twelve years (1792-1804) the notices are scanty. A Mr. Whitefoot held the pastorate from June 1793 to May 1794. After him came a Mr. Williams, of Ashburn, "whose connection with the church was as unfortunate for the church as for himself." For three years (1794-97) the pulpit was supplied mainly by Captain Scott and Rev. Job Wilson, of Northwich. But on August 15, 1798, a new minister, Rev. Daniel Dunkerley, was ordained—the first ordination in Townley Street. He removed to Loxley, near Sheffield, in 1801, and was succeeded by Rev. J. Raban, late of Wallingford, in 1802. "From the influence of Methodism, on the one hand, and hyper-Calvinism on the other, he found the cause at Townley Street Chapel at a very low ebb." His work effected a revival, and he established what in the eyes of the people appeared the superfluous novelty of a Sunday school. But he left, discouraged, "towards the close of 1803."

The second "charity sermon" on behalf of the Sunday school was preached by "Rev. T. H. Browning, minister of Hope Chapel, Bristol-Hotwells," in August 1804, and the visit resulted in his being invited to the vacant pastorate. He accepted, and was minister till July 1816—the congregation increasing so much at first that the chapel had to be enlarged in 1810.

Nearly three years elapsed before the settlement (June 1819) of Rev. John Harris, the next minister. His stay lasted till December 1824. By a strange coincidence his successor was named Dunkerley (though David, not Daniel), and came from the same place, Loxley, to which Daniel had removed. He was in charge from November 20, 1825, to April 5, 1829. In connection with his pastorate may be mentioned that, in 1828, the Sunday school reached its highest point, 600 scholars; and that in the same year a remarkable man was elected superintendent—viz., Mr. James Rathbone. He had already been thirty-seven years in the school as pupil and teacher, and he remained superintendent till his death on August 31, 1863. He was a deacon for a still longer period, and a church member for fifty-seven years.

In 1829 the annual Sunday school sermons were preached by Rev. Samuel Bowen, classical tutor at Newtown College, North Wales, and, as in Mr. Browning's case, this became the occasion of his call to the pastorate. He settled in October 1830, and retired only after nearly thirty years' ministry in April 1860. Rev. S. W. M'All, M.A., a student of Cheshunt College, was chosen to take his place, and was ordained in the following

October. In less than three years he removed to London, and in 1864 Rev. Joseph Moffatt took up the charge. But in 1867 the pastorate was again vacant, and was not filled for nearly three years. Rev. G. J. Allen, B.A., late of Warwick, settled in 1869, and remained till 1890.

A visible sign of great progress in the strength of the church during his time was the erection of Park Green, at a cost of £10,000. The autumn of 1877, the centenary of the church, witnessed the opening of this beautiful building; and Mr. Allen was Chairman of the Union for 1878, when, with due fitness, its meetings were held at Macclesfield. Mr. Allen's removal to Australia, in search of health, was followed by the twelve years' pastorate of Rev. J. Todd Ferrier (1891-1903). The present minister, Rev. W. E. Ireland, M.A., settled in 1904.

### Roe Street, Macclesfield.

In a sense the Rev. R. S. M'All, better known later as Rev. Dr. M'All, of Mosley Street, Manchester, was the first minister of this church, but his work was not in Roe Street. For nine years he preached in the lecture-room of the Macclesfield Sunday school, erected in 1814, like its Stockport prototype, "on a general and liberal basis." Then for three years he preached in St. George's Chapel, a place belonging to the shareholders by whose money it was built. These, according to the trust, possessed the right to appoint the minister, and did actually give the pulpit to Mr. M'All for life. With his removal to Manchester, in January 1827, there came an opening for trouble. It was not likely that the church, supposed to be founded on the "Congregational plan," would renounce its inherent right to a voice in the election of his successor. In point of fact, it seems to have claimed the sole voice, and, together with the seatholders, to have invited Mr. G. B. Kidd, a student of Rotherham College, without any reference to the shareholders. Perhaps on this account the shareholders, in the exercise of their legal power, refused to admit Mr. Kidd, and "adopted measures for connecting the chapel with the establishment." Not all of them, however; some made common cause with the church by selling out their shares and contributing the proceeds to the fund, already started, for the erection of a new chapel in Roe Street.

This happened in the course of 1828, and in May 1829 the chapel was ready for opening, the congregation meanwhile having







Rev. G. B. KIDD.



Rev. S. BOWEN.

been "permitted by the Independent Church in Townley Street to worship in their chapel twice on the Lord's Day."

Inaugural services took place on Thursday, the 14th of May, and Sunday, the 17th—two full services on each day. At the former Dr. Raffles preached twice, with the Rev. James Turner assisting; at the latter Mr. M'All (the late pastor) preached twice. Mr. Kidd's ordination followed in August, many neighbouring ministers being present besides those taking prominent part, with deeply interested and crowded congregations; and thus began a ministry which held on its way full of usefulness for more than fifty years. In no long time the chapel was freed from debt and also the school-rooms, which, soon after 1829, were greatly enlarged. The church, moreover, found itself strong enough to foster a colony of its members at Bollington,<sup>1</sup> and so set going a cause which ultimately became independent. Writing, too, at the end of thirty-four years, Mr. Kidd could justly claim it as significant of solid success that his church was still flourishing, financially and spiritually, although many other "religious interests" had sprung up in the town, and Roe Street had been continually depleted by the migration to great centres, like Manchester, Liverpool, and London, of young men and others whom it had trained; and he adds a description of the "means of grace" regularly employed throughout his time which, as typical of what in those old-fashioned days was found sufficient, is worth recalling. There were, of course, the usual Sunday services in chapel and school, and the usual monthly observance of the Lord's Supper. But, in addition, "after the evening service a monthly prayer-meeting was held in the vestry; on Monday evening was the weekly prayer-meeting, with an address; on Wednesday evening, weekly, the male and female congregational Bible-class meeting; preaching on Thursday evening; special weekly meeting on Saturday evening for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At this meeting, likewise, a short address was given." Such was the simple spiritual food, served out copiously week by week, on which our churches (as some of us can remember) used to depend for their growth, and, strange to say, it actually served its purpose!

Mr. Kidd resigned his charge in 1880 and removed to the neighbourhood of Hull, where (at Walton) he died on 14th March 1890, full of years and peace. In noting the fact of his death the Report of that year refers to the "many tokens of honour and esteem which he received at his resignation from his own congregation and from the town in which he had lived so

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kidd preached here on Sunday afternoons for thirty years.

long," and to the almost unique period of "unflagging zeal and faithfulness" which so richly merited them. "To few men is it given to serve so long in the ministry of Christ, and to fewer still to maintain for more than half a century the pastorate of one church." During the twenty-six years that have elapsed since his retirement the church has had four pastors—the Rev. Joseph Sidebottom, from 1881 to 1891 (once of Bucklow Hill, 1863–67); the Rev. D. B. Evans, from 1891 to 1895; the Rev. R. W. Jackson, M.A., from 1896 to 1902 (now of Guilden Morden, in Cambridgeshire, and of considerable note as a writer of stories illustrative of the elements, pathetic and humorous, in our church life); and the Rev. C. E. Foster, M.A., 1902.

Times have changed for the worse in Macclesfield; and the prolonged slackness of the staple trade has, along with special causes incident to its position, made work at Roe Street increasingly difficult. There is nothing, however, in its outlook—given unity, energy, and adaptiveness—to warrant despair; while there is not a little in its past to evoke enthusiasm.

### Marple.

Some Congregationalists, resident in this village about the years 1859 and 1860, found the nearest churches of their order at Marple Bridge, Hatherlow, and New Mills too far off for regular attendance. Marple was a growing place, and by 1864 the number of Congregationalists had so far increased that it now seemed practicable to erect a chapel on the spot. A meeting held on March 24 decided upon this step and appointed a committee<sup>1</sup> to receive plans. On 26th September of the same year Sir James Watts, of Abney Hall, Cheadle, laid the foundation-stone, and on 18th May 1865 the new chapel was opened.

On November 3, 1865, a church was formed, by which, on the same date, the Rev. John Simpson, late of Stretford, was elected to the pastorate. New schools were opened in December 1866, the scholars having met since January in the vestry and chapel. Mr. Simpson closed a brief but honourable ministry on July 3, 1867, and had for successor the Rev. Thomas Hartley, of Sedbergh. He entered on his work the first Sunday of 1868, and on the same day the new gallery at the front end of the

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Messrs. Thomas Carver, S. Hodgkinson, Wm. S. Hodgkinson, T. Rawson, S. Ingleson, John Carver, Joseph Bowden, Thomas Hyde.

church was opened. Transepts were added in November 1873, and an organ in July 1875. Mr. Hartley removed to Burslem in June 1882; and the Rev. John R. Legge, M.A., a student of Lancashire College, who came next, held the pastorate from February 1883 to the end of 1890, when he accepted a call to Buckhurst Hill, Essex. The Rev. Robert Allan, the fourth and present minister, settled in July 1891.

During the spring of 1894 the interior of the chapel was improved by the addition of new windows and an enlargement of the organ.

The school premises—used also as a British school since 1868—had to be enlarged in 1883, and again in 1899.

Marple has always been an active church—zealous of good works. It has a Band of Hope, established in 1883; a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, established in May 1888; a Children's Sunday evening service, established in October 1892—all prosperous. Its support of foreign missions (largely by the munificence of Mr. Thomas Carver) has long been conspicuously generous, and it has not been unmindful of the Cheshire Union. Several of its leading members might be mentioned who have helped it well, by gifts of money and personal service. In April 1876 the Union held its meetings here, and two things, at least, distinguished them—one a remarkably able and beautiful address from the Chair by the Rev. T. Hartley, and another, the moral courage which broke through an old custom and set up a new one of "conducting the luncheons on total abstinence principles." Such a step forward may seem nothing now, but it meant something at the time; and one is not surprised to hear that "the Church was much commended by the majority of the people present for the stand taken in this respect."

In 1898 the mission, carried on so successfully by Mr. Thomas Carver for many years in the Union Rooms, Marple, became a part of the work of the church, and was formed into a branch church—the Rev. Gerard Nicholson being ordained its pastor. On his accepting a call to Levenshulme, the Rev. W. M. Ainsbury,<sup>1</sup> who had won high esteem as evangelist at the British School, Bowdon, succeeded him, and entered on his work at the Union Rooms in May 1900.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The church in the Union Rooms is now, however, practically dissociated from the Marple church.

<sup>2</sup> Communicated, with most of the other facts, by Rev. R. Allan.

### Tabernacle, Stockport.

The earliest trace of Congregationalism in Stockport—as distinct from Nonconformity generally—connects itself with the Rev. Samuel Eaton, best known as joint-founder, with Rev. Timothy Taylor, of the Independent Church at Duckinfield. Whilst pastor at Duckinfield, Mr. Eaton acted also as “chaplain to the garrison at Chester,” necessitating absences which, by allowing too much scope to “gifted persons” (or lay preachers) in the Duckinfield pulpit, led to a serious dividing and weakening of the congregation. Consequently he gave up his chaplaincy that he might give more heed to his pastorate; but he did so too late to mend what was amiss. He therefore retired, with a number of adherents, to Stockport, where he preached, and may be supposed to have organised a church, in the Grammar School. Here he carried on his work till silenced by the Act of Uniformity, 1662, when he went to live in “Bredburie,” and is said to have attended the ministry of Mr. Angier at Denton, one of the fortunate Nonconformists who found leave somehow to go on preaching. He died January 9, 1764, aged sixty-eight, and was buried at Denton Chapel. There is no visible link between Eaton and Stockport Congregationalism in its later developments; but he must have sowed the seed of these at least.<sup>1</sup>

What is now called the Tabernacle comes first into view. It stands on the same site in “Middle Hillgate” as an older and smaller building, the land for which was leased on 24th June 1700. John Byrom, the first minister, was a member of the Cheshire classis, and appears among its subscribers<sup>2</sup> to those famous “Heads of Agreement” between Presbyterians and Independents, which emanated in 1690 from “ye united ministers in and about London.” Stockport is said to have been his first, and may have been his only, charge. After a ministry of some seventeen years (1680–1697), he “finished his course a few years” later “in a place near Saddleworth,” Yorkshire. Where his “conventicle” met is not known, but probably in private houses or (after 1689) a hired room about Hillgate. Mr. Richard Milne, the second minister, a student of Frankland’s

<sup>1</sup> In the Tenison MS. (1669) Stockport is stated to have “a conventicle of Nonconformists,” and, under the Indulgence Act of 1672, a licence was granted to “ye widow Broome,” of Stockport, for a meeting of Congregationalists in her house.

<sup>2</sup> May 1691.



Academy,<sup>1</sup> was ordained by the "classis" at Macclesfield, June 18, 1700. According to the Evans MS. he "left off preaching" in 1720. But, according to a letter dated "Hale, 22nd February 1617," some troublesome people of the congregation had done "mischief," and Mr. Milne, in consequence, had been "disordered and unable to preach this long time." The latter seems to be nearer the truth. For his successor, Samuel de la Rose, was certainly in possession before July 27, 1718, on which date he preached a sermon which had grave consequences. Its text was 1 Cor. xv. 22, and its subject "a brief account of the two covenants" (hyper-Calvinistic). A section of his people resented its doctrine. On November 15, 1720, they subscribed what might be called a "round-robin," asking him either to submit the matter to certain "reverend senior ministers in the neighbourhood" or to resign. He replied (December 26) by exhorting them to greater peaceableness and discretion. Nevertheless, he read the sermon to a committee of ministers at Stockport on January 25, 1721, and when on the 28th they issued a letter declaring its doctrine to be such as *they* could not safely preach to the people committed to their care, he challenged their verdict by preaching the sermon a second time to his own people on February 12th. He also let it be published with an apologetic introduction by his brother.<sup>2</sup> At length, on August 8, 1721, the classis, "after the most mature deliberation," wrote a letter urging that Mr. De la Rose should peaceably withdraw, that if he did the contending parties should unite in the choice of a suitable successor, and that if he did not the "dissatisfied" should secede and set up for themselves. Mr. De la Rose refused; the "dissatisfied" followed the advice of their reverend supporters, and the result was a new chapel in High Street, "licensed for a place of worship on 11th July 1722 at the General Quarter Sessions at Nantwich." Of this place Mr. James Hardie became minister, and his solemn ordination on September 3 and 4, 1723, by the classis<sup>3</sup> gave him the imprimatur of orthodoxy. Yet it is this church in High Street from which, in the course of time, has descended the Unitarian Church in Petersgate.

At the old chapel Mr. De la Rose held on till his death in March 1728. He was followed, probably<sup>4</sup> later in the same

<sup>1</sup> Entered May 16, 1693.

<sup>2</sup> John de la Rose, of Sheffield.

<sup>3</sup> This was the only occasion when the classis met at Stockport in the fifty-three years of its existence. The meeting seems to have been held there on purpose. In September 1722 Mr. De la Rose was expelled from the classis on the technical ground that he had not sought its ordination.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Fletcher, of Stockport, applied to the classis for ordination in May 1728 and was put off. He applied again in September with the same result. On May

year, by Rev. Edmund Fletcher, who died minister of the Peak Chapel, October 7, 1745, aged forty-one. Rev. James Smith, M.A., came next in 1741, and remained till his death in 1744. His successor, Rev. Peter Walkden, M.A., had been in the ministry since 1709 and had given the charge to Mr. Smith at his ordination on August 26, 1741. He died pastor of the Tabernacle in 1769. The other ministers have been—Thomas Brook, of Heckmondwike Academy, from 1789 to his death in 1789; Thomas Crowther, of Northowram Academy, from November 1793 to his death in the following March; Thomas Auchincloss, D.D., from 1795 to his death in May 1800; Daniel Dunkerley, from about 1801 to his acceptance of Loxley Church, near Sheffield, in 1803;<sup>1</sup> Solomon Ashton, from June 1806 to his death in September 1836; Ebenezer Davies, of Rotherham College, from July 1838 to October 1839; John Thornton, from December 1840 to 1848, when he became first minister of Wycliffe Chapel; Mark Howard, of Airedale College, from January 1850 to April 1853; James Buckley, from July 1854 to December 1861; Joseph Thomas Woodhouse, of Cavendish Academy, from August 1863 to December 1872; William Andrew Blake, from May 1873 to 1875, when he transferred himself with his congregation to Wycliffe Chapel. There have been several crises in the history of the Tabernacle. One occurred, as already shown, in the case of Mr. De la Rose; a second in 1800 "when the chapel was shut up, and so continued till a few persons who were attached to the place united and gave a call to the Rev. Daniel Dunkerley," who did no good; a third—of the right kind—in October 1804, when the deserted pulpit was supplied for the first time by Mr. Solomon Ashton, whose ministry of more than thirty years (not actually begun before June 1806) brought a return of blessing. Early in his time, "the congregation having considerably increased, it was now judged proper to take down the old chapel and erect a new one on the same spot of ground. Accordingly, upon the 22nd day of March 1807, divine worship was performed for the last time in the old building, and, on August 23, for the

6, 1729, a deputation from the classis was appointed to meet in Stockport on July 1st, and there to make full inquiries. Nothing further is recorded; but evidently the date (1730) of his settlement, given by Heginbotham (ii. 30) and Urwick, p. 300, is wrong.

<sup>1</sup> According to Urwick, p. 241, the Rev. Daniel Dunkerley was ordained to Townley Street Church on August 15, 1798, and (p. 242) is said to have removed from *Macclesfield* to Loxley. This is an obvious mistake, due to the fact that his brief connection with the Tabernacle has been overlooked. His name occurs in the Townley Street Register of Baptisms as late as November 9, 1801, and it must have been after then that he came to Stockport.

first time in the new edifice which is called the Tabernacle.”<sup>1</sup> A fourth crisis came in 1848, when Mr. Thornton, with a large portion of the church, seceded and erected “Wycliffe,” and now in 1875 the end might seem to have come. Not yet, however, by any means. On March 22, seven months before the amalgamation, Mr. Blake presented a letter to the District Committee in which the trustees made an offer of the place to the County Union as an evangelistic station, rent free, on condition that the premises be kept in a proper state of repair. The offer was declined, and a counter offer made to recommend a grant of £40 if the place was worked as a “mission” by some joint-committee. Here the matter rested till June 13, 1879, when Mr. Blake announced the “engagement of Mr. Hosken as an evangelist in connection with the church at Wycliffe to work at the Tabernacle,” and asked for aid. At first the merely tentative answer was given that the Committee would recommend a grant when money “could be spared,” but in January 1880 it decided “that a grant of £40 be recommended to the Tabernacle, Stockport, on two conditions—viz., that the Wycliffe congregation contribute £20 to the Union, and that the aided church be under the care of Wycliffe and its pastor.” The case came up at the annual meeting of the Assembly in March, and (from the Report) we learn that the work of Mr. Hosken had been going on for a year past with remarkable success. “At the present time” (March 1880) “there is an attendance on Sundays of 80 adults and 90 children in the morning, while the evening congregation consists of 350 adults and 50 children. Twelve members were transferred to the newly formed church from Mr. Blake’s at Wycliffe, and to these 44 more have been added, so that the church now numbers 56 members. During last year no less a sum than £47, 5s. 2d. was raised by weekly offerings alone.” In view of these hopeful facts the Assembly gladly voted the £40 asked for on the conditions indicated, and seldom has confidence been better justified. In 1881 the Report shows an increase of the evening congregation from 350 to 400, of the membership from 56 to 74, of the income from £47, 5s. 2d. to £130, while £36 in addition had been raised toward an outlay of £90 in cleaning and beautifying the chapel. Some difficulty, due to a misunderstanding of the relation to Wycliffe, had occurred, but had been easily adjusted, and the prospect was entirely bright. In fact, 1882 brought the welcome

<sup>1</sup> *Congregational Magazine*, May 1821, p. 50; apparently the first use of the name Tabernacle. It seated twice as many as the old building. 140 persons were added to the church during the next sixteen years.

statement that the church, with gratitude "for past kindnesses," felt itself able to trust its own resources for the future, still working, however, in connection with Wycliffe. In 1884 Mr. Hosken, having been ordained 14th September 1882, removed to Charlesworth in Derbyshire.<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded in the autumn of 1884 by the Rev. Isaac Hall, from Garden Street, Sheffield, and forthwith the chapel was closed for renovations.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hall's removal in 1891 was followed by the settlement in 1892 of the Rev. E. T. H. Allen, from Whalley Road, Accrington, who remained till 1898. In the same year Mr. J. H. Halstead, B.A., of Lancashire College, accepted the pastorate, and is still the much respected minister.

### Orchard Street.

On the ground that in 1711 a *Mr. Hyde, of Stockport*, was recommended to the Independent Church at Ware for its minister, it has been suggested that the Tabernacle (or rather the Hillgate) Church was not the only Congregational "cause" in Stockport at that date. Possibly; but Mr. Hyde may more likely have been just a resident in the town, while it is certain that in 1725<sup>3</sup> the only two congregations were the Tabernacle and the one recently gathered in High Street. It is also certain that in 1772 these were still the only two.<sup>4</sup> Our first hint of a third interest occurs in a deed dated December 12, 1786, which conveyed to Rev. John Bristol a parcel of land in Water Lane—land whereon he "hath lately at his own expense" erected "a good and substantial edifice or building now used, or intended as and for, a Dissenting meeting-house." That the people who met here were the same as those who formed Orchard Street,<sup>5</sup> is declared by the following extract from the Orchard Street minute-book, dated February 8, 1843. "In 1787 the land upon which this chapel stands was purchased from Mr. John Holmes. The congregation had been previously accustomed to worship in a small chapel in the Park; but, being desirous of having their

<sup>1</sup> Thence to Burnley (1888) and Ipswich (1896).

<sup>2</sup> Already "adumbrated" at meeting on September 14, 1883, held to celebrate the first anniversary of Mr. Hosken's ordination.

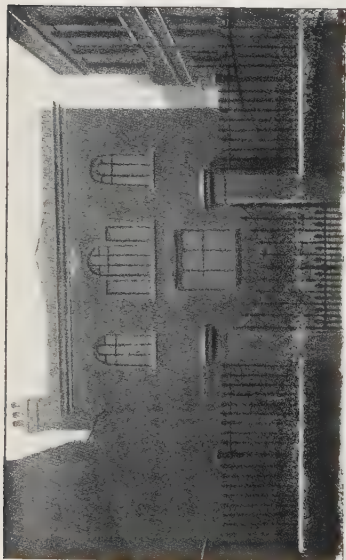
<sup>3</sup> See Evans MS., compiled between 1717-1729 (Williams Library).

<sup>4</sup> See Thompson MS.: "begun to be collected October 1772" (Williams Library).

<sup>5</sup> They may, of course, quite well have come from the Tabernacle after 1772, as tradition seems to say.



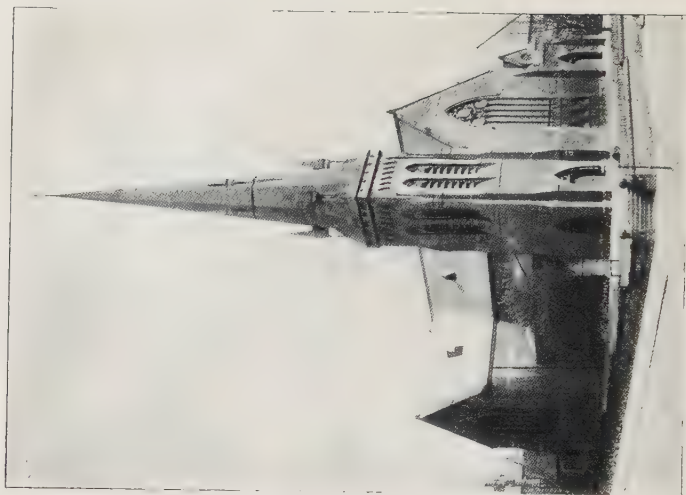




THE TABERNACLE STOCKPORT.



ORCHARD STREET, STOCKPORT.



WELLINGTON ROAD, STOCKPORT.

place of worship in a more inviting and pleasant situation, they succeeded in obtaining possession of the present site." The chapel, it is further said, cost about £900, to which amount "several gentlemen in the town, as well as at a distance, contributed handsomely." "Some congregations" outside also helped—one at Leeds to the extent of £40. It was opened in 1788. The "Church covenant," entered into by those who constituted the first membership, is dated July 13, 1789; and at the same time a "call" was given to Rev. William Maurice. It has been supposed that the chapel was erected for Mr. Maurice, that he was minister for about five years, and that he had previously been minister at Haslingden and Bolton.<sup>1</sup> But the facts are these: After his training at the academy of Northowram, he preached a few months at Haslingden in Lancashire, and then came to Stockport. As Townley Street Chapel, Macclesfield, was opened by the Rev. William Morris (Maurice), of Stockport, on March 16, 1788, he must have been already in Stockport at that date, and this is confirmed by what is said in the call of July 13, 1789, that he had given "full proof of his ministry" at Orchard Street. But the call was not accepted, nor yet immediately declined. It was, says the church minute-book, "returned to the church" in July 1790. Another call was drawn up, signed, and presented September 7, 1791! This Mr. Maurice accepted, and he was "ordained over the church as pastor thereof on July 7, 1791." On "October 30, 1791," however, he resigned and went to Bolton,<sup>2</sup> so that he was actually pastor about four months. His removal to Fetter Lane Chapel, London, took place from Bolton.<sup>3</sup>

The second minister, Rev. Robert Anlezark, was called by the church on November 5, 1792, and began work in February 1793. In May 1801 he resigned, and was afterwards incumbent of Castle Church and St. Chad's, Stafford, for nearly twenty-five years. A notable successor was found in Rev. William Evans, of Bridgnorth, first Secretary of the Cheshire Union, and perhaps its most enthusiastic advocate. He came to Stockport, after a second call, in 1803. His first sermons were preached on October

<sup>1</sup> Urwick, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> So we find from a copy, in the Minute Book, of Mr. Anlezark's call: "We are on account of the removal of our late Pastor . . . unto Bolton."

<sup>3</sup> A letter by Rev. J. Waddington, of date May 19, 1843, assigns the reason of his quick departure: "Mr. Maurice, the first minister, preached a sermon on the divinity of Christ. One of his hearers who had imbibed Arian sentiments was offended, and, having obtained the seat rents, expended them in painting the chapel, and compelled the minister to leave." This hearer must have been a leading trustee. A source of much subsequent trouble to Orchard Street was the inordinate degree of power given to the trustees.

2, 1803, and his last on January 13, 1814. He died on September 29, "loving and beloved by his people."<sup>1</sup>

The Union has never had a more devoted friend. "There is one thing more I have to mention," were among his latest words, "which lies near to and is very dear to my heart—the Cheshire Union. Let it still continue and remain long a union; give up everything but truth and a good conscience for the sake of union and brotherly love; give it your support, and let it have your prayers, for I know it is the 'work of God.'" He practised to the full what he enjoined on others. It was his habit to visit the stations of the Union, sometimes several times, in the course of a year. And "his occasional visits to distant villages were welcomed by the inhabitants with as much rapture as the ancient Romans felt in witnessing a procession, and excited in the heart an infinitely purer joy. How often he cheered the hearts of our brethren amidst their sorrows, and animated them amidst their difficulties—their tender recollection of his mild virtues and heavenly deportment is the best memorial. By identifying the interests of their congregations with his own he established a connection between the greater part of the churches in the country, and taught each separate interest alternately to participate in the joys and feel for the sorrows of the whole." Such is the witness borne to him by his successor, Mr. Pugsley, in the Report of 1816, and forty years later the Rev. James Turner could still speak of him as the Union's "greatest ornament," whose place had never quite been filled—adding to this the statement that he was a "well-educated and ingenious man, whose pulpit abilities were acknowledged by competent judges to be of the highest order."

A student of Hoxton Academy supplied the pulpit in July 1815, "a few weeks after the Battle of Waterloo." He came for two Sundays, and stayed for five. He came by accident, "in the room of a student who was unwell," and the "accident" issued in "a unanimous invitation to become the pastor." In this way the student, N. K. Pugsley, became pastor of Orchard Street toward the end of 1815, and began his "stated duties on the first Sunday in 1816." "I sustained the pastorate," he says, "nearly four years, and during that time a large increase took place, so that there was not room to accommodate the people that applied for sittings. Unfortunately there had never been a very harmonious feeling between the trustees and the deacons, and the disagreements at length became so painful to me that, seeing no prospect of peace or usefulness, I resigned my charge in December

<sup>1</sup> So the Minute Book.

1819." His successor, Rev. George Frederick Ryan, was minister from May 1820 to 1831.<sup>1</sup> On September 9, 1832, John Waddington, of Airedale College, took up the pastorate, and retained it till his removal to Union Street Chapel, Southwark.<sup>2</sup> He was the first Independent minister of Stockport to realise the necessity of associating Sunday schools with particular churches as a branch of their proper work. The Orchard Street School was opened on August 1, 1834. Its success led to the erection of a larger school in 1852, and the other Congregational churches in the town have sensibly followed his example. Mr. Waddington's pastorate was troubled by the old difficulty with the trustees, and on his removal a majority of the church left also and took possession of the old Unitarian meeting-house in High Street, called Salem Chapel.<sup>3</sup> Thus when Mr. Absalom Clark, a student of Lancashire College, settled at Orchard Street in July 1847, he came to an almost empty chapel. But this rather attracted than dismayed him—"since he was anxious to commence his ministry on entirely new ground." Having secured the confidence of the "remnant," he proceeded at once to act on his conviction that "it was absolutely necessary to deal with the trust-deed; and there being a debt on the chapel it was sold, with the consent of the trustees, and bought by the congregation." Thus the chapel both lost its debt and was free to be placed on a new trust, which wiped out the old occasion of offence. Accordingly, when the "remnant" invited the larger section of Salem Chapel to come back they did so, and "union" advanced the church to a strength which enabled it to build for itself "a more stately mansion" in 1865-66. But the old place was not closed. After the congregation removed to Wellington Road, one of the deacons, Mr. Henry Faulder, took it over, and, by sustaining for several years a medical missionary as well as a pastor, made it a centre of good works both for body and soul. When the medical mission was given up, the pastor, Rev. John Harker, remained—and remains to this day. He came from Alston, Cumberland, in 1872, and his charge at Orchard Street is described in the Report of 1878 as an Evangelistic Agency. Mr. Harker did not attach himself to the Union till 1891. To his efforts, and largely to his generosity,

<sup>1</sup> "He warmly supported the Cheshire Union and induced its committee to make the first grant to Hazel Grove, in which village he laid the foundation-stone of Ebenezer Chapel, and greatly promoted the spread of Congregational principles" (Heginbotham, ii. p. 38). He was an author of some note, and became a D.D.

<sup>2</sup> He, too, became a D.D., and is best known as a laborious historian of Congregationalism.

<sup>3</sup> The Report of 1846 records a contribution of £1 to the Union funds from "Salem Chapel."



the "Swann Street Mission" owes its origin and maintenance. Here the present room, capable of seating 250, was opened in 1898, and has never come upon the Union funds. Its lay evangelist (Mr. Crozier) works with and for Mr. Harker in one of the most necessitous districts of the town. The spirit of Mr. Harker is that of the Good Samaritan.

### Hanover Chapel.

When Mr. Pugsley resigned Orchard Street in December 1819, it was with no intention of setting up a new "cause." He was half-disposed to enter the Established Church, in which he had been brought up and for whose liturgy he retained a great attachment. There were things, however, in the Book of Common Prayer which he could not accept *ex animo*, and this held him back. Finally, his state of suspense was ended by the action of others. Mr. Jesse Howard (well known locally) invited him to meet a party of gentlemen at his house to dinner, not divulging his purpose to Mr. Pugsley. But after dinner Mr. Howard declared his belief that there was room for another chapel in Stockport if it could be sure of such a ministry as Mr. Pugsley's, offered to subscribe £1000 towards the building of one, and pledged the support of the other gentlemen present. So "warm" was the response that before the meeting broke up £3000 had been promised, and Mr. Pugsley made up his mind to remain. After much discussion regarding the "site," one was selected "in a garden on Lancashire Hill," partly because there was not a single place of worship or Sunday school in Heaton Norris, except a small Episcopal chapel in Manchester Road, partly because the soil would "form a dry and excellent cemetery." Mr. Pugsley himself laid the foundation-stone, "without any form, or ceremony, or procession, and without any person being present except the builders."<sup>1</sup> In laying the stone he uttered simply the words: "*In spem contra spem*" (in hope against hope)—a pathetic indication of his own misgivings. For the local opposition was great and might yet triumph. Indeed, when the first contractor failed, and left the building on

<sup>1</sup> These are Mr. Pugsley's own words, and one naturally asks what had become of his friends? He says later, in the same letter (read at the Jubilee services, October 21, 1871), what seems to show that they had left him financially as well as personally in the lurch, viz.: "Every shilling for building the chapel was collected by myself." He says also that he did not receive a single shilling (of salary) during the whole time the chapel was building.



his hands, half-finished, for more than three months, it seemed on the point of triumphing; but another contractor was found to complete the work, and, after many difficulties, the structure stood ready for opening. The inaugural services were held on Sunday, September 30, 1821, the Rev. R. S. M'All, of Macclesfield, preaching in the morning and the Rev. William Thorp, D.D., of Bristol, in the evening. On the following Wednesday a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Collyer, of London, concluded the function, and it was he who suggested the name "Hanover Chapel"—after his own in London.<sup>1</sup> A church was formed, and the Lord's Supper administered to about thirty communicants on the first Sunday in July 1822, and henceforward progress was rapid, unbroken, and harmonious. "The peace and prosperity of the congregation," wrote Mr. Pugsley,<sup>2</sup> "ever since the chapel was opened often called forth, both from the pastor and the people, devout thanksgivings and grateful praise." Hanover, in fact, soon grew to be the most numerous and influential congregation in the town or neighbourhood, and its pastor one of the most acceptable of preachers.

He was especially in request for Sunday school anniversaries, being the preacher, for example, at Hatherlow year after year continuously between 1820 and 1826, and on ten later occasions before 1856. It was long remembered how he used to walk over from Stockport to Hatherlow "wearing his gown." There existed, however, for a time one "fly in the ointment," in the shape of a debt on the building of £300, which gradually accumulated to £700, and so preyed upon Mr. Pugsley's mind that the anxiety (in 1844) broke down his health. The people saw the

<sup>1</sup> It is only as illustrating the local (and surely unscrupulous) opposition that we venture to quote a notice which was sent to the *Congregational Magazine* for 1821, viz. :—

"The following advertisement was placarded lately in and around Stockport, and published in the Manchester newspapers :—'Heaton Chapel, Lancashire Hill, Stockport. The above chapel will be opened for divine service on Sunday, September 30, 1821, when two sermons will be preached, that in the morning by the Rev. R. S. M'All, of Macclesfield, and that in the evening by the Rev. W. Thorp, D.D. of Bristol. Services to begin in the morning at half-past ten o'clock and in the evening at half-past six. A new organ, built by Greenwood, will be opened at the same time and a selection of music performed. Tickets of admission may be had of Mr. Lomax, bookseller, of the members of the Committee, and of the principal pewholders. For the bottom of the chapel, 3s.; gallery, 2s.' The sermons were, as might be expected, peculiarly excellent; but the performance (or exhibition), as a whole, was extremely disgusting to all serious persons, and to none more so than to the worthy ministers who preached on the occasion."

In the same notice Mr. Pugsley is called "a partial Conformist."

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Mr. S. R. Carrington written before his death (in 1868) and read at the Jubilee services, Oct. 16, 1871 (Heginbotham, vol. ii. p. 42).

effect, but did not at once discover the cause; but as soon as they did, their affection took steps instantly to remove the burden, and at a tea-meeting held on May 27, 1844, in the large room of the Stockport Sunday school, the whole debt was wiped out. Hanover at this date had no Sunday school of its own, probably out of a wish to sustain the "big school" of the town in its full strength. But the feeling grew up, under the light of experience, that, "if the school is to become the nursery of the church, every place of worship must have its own Sunday school." Hence, early in 1855, a subscription was started towards erecting a school on the vacant plot of ground behind the chapel; and on Easter Sunday 1856 the new building was opened by services, at which the Rev. Henry Allon, of London, preached, followed by a public meeting on the Monday evening. The result fulfilled every expectation, not a single child being taken from any other school, and yet nearly 500 being gathered ere long for training by Hanover teachers.

In July 1858 Mr. Pugsley closed his ministry, in consequence of "failing memory," which threatened to impose upon him the necessity to do what he "greatly disliked"—read his sermons. He was then in his seventy-second year, and lived in honoured retirement ten years longer, his days made free from care by a pension of £100 per annum provided for him by his attached people. Mr. Pugsley's name is subjoined to the 7th Report (November 1816) of the Cheshire Union, a Report which pleads the claims of the Union with great earnestness; and this is but one of several signs that he was more than a "partial" Nonconformist. Still, it is a fact that the first trust-deed of the chapel (which he may at least be assumed to have sanctioned) was by no means Congregationalist; nor, in the full sense, is the revised trust-deed of 1896, for here "the management of the affairs of the congregation, the chapel and the premises" is vested in a committee of six trustees (elected annually by the collective body of trustees), and of "twelve male church members or seat-holders" (elected annually at a general meeting of church members and seat-holders).

Certainly the powers of this committee are mostly financial, though they include the fixing of the minister's salary; and, as compared with the earlier trust, there is a large extension of privilege to the deacons, the church proper, and the combined meeting of church members and seat-holders. But there is lacking a clear recognition of the fact—fundamental to the Congregational idea—that the *fons et origo* of all power and privilege is the Church alone. Practically, nevertheless, the church has

more and more proved itself as Congregational as most other churches—thanks mainly, no doubt, to the teaching of its successive pastors. Mr. Pugsley tendered his resignation in December 1857, and his successor, the Rev. E. Coulson Jay—a grandson of Jay, of Bath—took charge in June 1858. His brief ministry closed in December 1861, and was followed by a “vacancy” of nearly two years and a half, when a student from Spring Hill College—Rev. A. Wilson, B.A.—accepted the pastorate, settling in May 1864.

At the annual meeting of the Union held in Hanover (1867) Mr. Wilson occupied the chair; and, though craving the indulgence due to a “novice,” enforced very ably his conception of the principles which are essential to the prosperity of the Union and the success of its aggressive work. These are four, all needing, he thought, a more decided and practical recognition on our part: (1) That our work as associated churches is antagonistic to no other body of Evangelical Christians; (2) that there is a “true inward and spiritual unity of feeling and religious life” which already exists among us and among all true Christians; (3) that “the elasticity of our organisations” fits them for “perfect adaptation” to all the exigencies of our county; (4) that we need among us a fuller recognition of the sacredness of the mutual relations between “pastor and people.” There is a passage under the third head which well merits quotation:—

“Our principles of church government are what we believe to be Christ’s own law—that Christian believers should gather into assemblies; that each assembly should have the right to rule, direct, and govern itself; and should allow to all other assemblies the same liberty. Simple as these principles are their very simplicity gives them great flexibility, and admits of a variety of modifications. The founders of this Union perfectly understood this, and their successors have not been slow to follow in their footsteps. The mere changes of name which this Union has undergone in the course of its history indicate this. Its first name was the ‘Cheshire Union.’ Subsequently we find it styled ‘The Cheshire Home Missionary Society.’ To-day its name is ‘The Cheshire Union of Congregational Churches.’

“These outward changes correspond to changes in its internal organisation. At first our brethren restricted their agents to itinerant labours, with permission, where practicable, to found churches. At a subsequent period they seem to have employed evangelists only, or home missionaries properly so called, who visited from house to house and held cottage meetings, but were not encouraged to found churches. At present we have

both of these systems in operation, yet we are not sacrificing any of our distinctive principles. I am of opinion, too, that it would be no departure from our principles, rather a return to the Scriptural model, if the four churches of our faith and order in this town, instead of being, as they now are, isolated communities, constituted one church, having a plurality of pastors and a community of interests, and exercising a healthy supervision of evangelistic operations in the neighbouring district."

Surely these are the words of a man who had "his eyes open"! Mr. Wilson removed to Brunswick Chapel, Bristol, in 1879, leaving Hanover in a very healthy condition. There was no likelihood of its becoming less healthy under the Rev. Henry Harries, M.A., who came from Hope Chapel, Bristol, in August 1880, and went to his present charge, Clapton Park, in 1893; nor yet under the Rev. W. G. Allan, M.A., B.D., whose pastorate—truly educative—extended from 1895 to 1904, when a failure of health forced him to resign. Still, changes have been taking place in the congregation, consequent on changes in the district, which make it widely different in character from what it once was. It is now to a great extent what is understood by a "town" church—with the obligation upon it to face the problems of such a church. Happily its present pastor, Rev. C. J. Barry, B.A. (1904), seems fully alive to the need of adaptation, and is surrounded by a people still numerous, vigorous, and hopeful.

### Wellington Road.

This church represents Orchard Street in another form. It is a memorial of the bicentenary celebration of 1862. One part of that event was the creation of a Central County Fund to promote the building of chapels and schools; and when Orchard Street congregation decided to build, a grant from the Fund of £1000 gave it an encouraging start. The whole cost, including land and organ, was about £6000. James Sidebottom, Esq., laid the foundation-stone on February 22, 1865, and the then chairman of the Congregational Union, Rev. David Thomas, B.A., together with the Rev. Enoch Mellor, D.D., of Halifax, opened the church for worship on April 25, 1866. For a while the Sunday school continued to meet in Orchard Street, but in 1875 a building, nearer and more convenient, was erected at a cost of nearly £2000 in Ratcliffe Street. In 1886-87 the congregation expended from £1200 to £1500 in enlarging the



school and improving the vestries. Both church and school are among the handsomest structures of their kind in the county. After 1873 Mr. Clark had for co-pastor the Rev. William Champness (of Wem, Salop), and this connection went on till both ministers resigned in 1878; while it lasted they also took the oversight of Hazel Grove—to its “immense advantage.” Mr. Champness removed to Fareham, Hants; Mr. Clark remained in Stockport. He died at Torquay “in the closing days of 1895.” “The County Union ever had a warm place in his affections, and in 1884 he filled its chair. The last years of his life were spent in the south of England, rendering such services as his health permitted to the churches there, but his heart was in Cheshire,”<sup>1</sup> and to the end he kept his name on the roll of his old church. Mr. Clark’s ministry extended through thirty-one years, and his successor, the Rev. T. W. Pinn, M.A., who removed from Lymm, September 1878, will soon attain a ministry of equal length. Nor has it been less variously useful, alike to Wellington Road and to the County Union, as the briefest recital of his work would show. But there is only space here to mention that in October 1888 the church celebrated, by appropriate services and meetings,<sup>2</sup> the centenary of Orchard Street Chapel, thus reviving the names and merits of bygone worthies, and doubtless warming its own heart in the process. One may add, too, that among its staunchest supporters is Mr. William Lees, an ex-chairman of the Union, as well as his son, Mr. Thomas H. Lees, since 1898 the Union’s admirable treasurer.

#### CALE GREEN AND WARD STREET SCHOOLS.

*(Communicated in substance by MR. PINN.)*

For many years a Sunday school was carried on and services conducted on the Sunday evenings, in an institute built by the Messrs. Carrington, father and uncle of the present Carringtons. The arrangements for these were made by the former, and preachers (lay) from various denominations officiated. About 1885 Mr. W. E. Carrington and his brother Colonel Carrington wished to be relieved of the responsibility of these services, and

<sup>1</sup> Report for 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Sunday, October 14th.—Dr. Macfadyen. 16th.—Rev. J. Hunter. 18th.—Conversazione (Chairman: the Mayor, Mr. Joseph Leigh). 19th.—Sunday School Tea Meeting (Chairman: the Superintendent, Mr. Councillor William Lees). Sunday, 21st.—Morning, Preacher—the Pastor; Evening, Preacher—Rev. A. Clark. Followed by a united Communion.



the matter came before the Ministers' and Deacons' Association.<sup>1</sup> A committee was appointed to work the place, including Rev. H. Harries, M.A., and Rev. T. W. Pinn, M.A. After some years (about 1889) it was thought better that the work should be carried on by Wellington Road Church, and so Cale Green became a branch of this church. The building was never given over to the Congregationalists, and is still the private property of the Messrs. Carrington, to whom a nominal rent is paid for its use. It is still worked by Wellington Road, and, though the Sunday evening services have not been very successful, there is a splendid Sunday school, and the teachers are now considering the question of larger accommodation. The place has never been aided by the Union, though in 1888 (June) a grant of £10 was recommended if found necessary; and in 1890 (January) it "was agreed that Cale Green should have the recognition of the Union."<sup>2</sup>

A few years after the settlement of Mr. Pinn at Wellington Road some of the Sunday school teachers, wishing to provide for scholars of a somewhat different station from those in their own school, started a Sunday evening school in the Wellington Road school building. After conducting it there for a short time a shed was hired in Mottram Street, and here the school was carried on for some years. In May 1889 a new building in Ward Street, which cost some £700, was opened, and there the school has been sustained most successfully. Some three or four years ago the building was enlarged—the cost being, for the most part, defrayed by a gift of about £500 from the trustees of the late Miss Martha Barnsley. The trust-deed of the school provides that there shall be representatives of the church at Wellington Road on its committee, and gives to the church a right of veto on its proceedings.

### Wycliffe Chapel.

This was opened, on April 17, 1850, by Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, and Rev. James Parsons, of York. The circumstances of its origin, briefly stated, were these:—Some of the Tabernacle congregation proposed to make alterations in the old chapel of a kind which the trustees refused to sanction. Thereupon Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Also before the District Committee, September 21, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> District Minute-Book.

John Hampson offered £500 toward the erection of a new chapel. The church, by a vote of 44 against 43, decided in favour of the offer; but, the minority electing to remain at the Tabernacle, the majority, with the pastor, Rev. John Thornton, "withdrew amicably, and until the new chapel<sup>1</sup> was erected, worshipped at the Lyceum, now the Albert Hall." Mr. Thornton held the pastorate till his retirement from the ministry in 1871 (January 1st). Rev. James Lee, M.A., who took up the duties at the end of 1871, resigned at the beginning of 1873.

Rev. W. A. Blake had recently come to the Tabernacle from Crewe, and, the time seeming ripe for a union of the two churches, this was proposed and agreed upon. The union took place in 1874, and was followed by the enlargement of Wycliffe by the addition of a new wing—begun on October 21, 1875.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Blake removed to Upper Portland Street, Southport, in 1886, and was succeeded by Rev. Henry Ward Price (from Queen Street, Chester) in 1887. Mr. Price's death in 1894 led to the return of Mr. Blake to his "early love" in 1895.<sup>3</sup> After eleven years' further work and a painful illness patiently borne, he died on July 16, 1906.

"Of the forty years of his ministry amongst the Congregationalists," says Mr. Pinn, "thirty were spent in Cheshire, the chair of whose Union he occupied in 1905. During all these years he maintained a stainless Christian character, won in a singular degree the love and regard of the members of his church and congregation, and not of them only, but of all who were privileged to come into contact with him, and exercised a ministry, earnest in purpose, fervent in spirit, rich in spiritual power, and helpful to those who attended it. He frequently wrote articles for magazines and hymns and pieces of poetry. He compiled a 'Manual for Ministers,' containing most appropriate services for baptisms, marriages, burials, &c., and was the author of a book on the Revelation, entitled 'Christ and Patmos: the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave.'"

There is a strong Sunday school at Wycliffe (507 scholars with 35 teachers in 1906), which occupies the ground-floor under the chapel.

<sup>1</sup> Its cost was £3000, of which four persons, Messrs. Hampson, James Kershaw, James Sidebottom, and Joseph Heaword, contributed £500.

<sup>2</sup> This brought up the accommodation to 900 sittings. The united congregation migrated to its new home in 1876, and in the same year (June 12) "the church in Wycliffe Chapel was recommended for admission into the Union" (District Minute-Book).

<sup>3</sup> His zeal in evangelistic work made him a "mission preacher" in 1889, but he was settled at Upper Clapton from 1889 to 1895.

### Union Chapel, Stockport.

Mr. Charles Earnshaw, one of Mr. Wilson's people, attended the district meeting on March 22, 1875, and commended to its support the case of Union Chapel, which he had been largely instrumental in building.<sup>1</sup> He did so in view of the good work being done there, and the "warmly cherished wish to have a settled minister." On the clear understanding that Mr. Earnshaw carried out at once his intention to put the chapel in trust for "Congregational" use, the Committee agreed to recommend a grant of £50. In the following April the Union confirmed this. In July (1876), Mr. E. Hedley, of Lancashire College, entered upon his ministry there, and on the same date<sup>2</sup> the trust was duly executed. "Union" signified in this connection<sup>3</sup> not that the church was partly Baptist and partly Pædo-Baptist, but that it sprang from the joint efforts and contributions of various Christian bodies residing on that side of Stockport, with Mr. Earnshaw as the leading spirit. For some years, before the erection of the chapel, services and a Sunday school were held on Mr. Earnshaw's premises. At the date of the church's formal constitution (in 1874), 25 members were inscribed on the church roll. At the end of the first year the membership was 41, with an evening congregation of 180 adults, and a Sunday school of 120. A year later the numbers have become still larger, particularly in the school, so much so that, "for sheer lack of room," the building of a new school is felt to be a necessity. The school was built<sup>4</sup> and opened (March 11), 1880, with a heavy debt, which was reduced by £370 in the course of the year. "What remains," it is said, "will stand to the account of the day school, so that the church and school are now (1881) practically free."

A sign of continued progress is the fact that for 1882 a reduction of £10 from the grant was asked for, and before the annual meeting of 1883 Mr. Hedley wrote to say that the church had decided no longer to be a burden on the Union funds but to become self-sustaining. Gratitude is expressed for the assistance received during a period of seven and a half years, and a

<sup>1</sup> In 1872—on land given by him—the stone was laid, June 27th, by Sir James Watts, of Abney Hall; it was to seat 320 persons and to cost about £1200.

<sup>2</sup> Minute of District Committee, 27th September.

<sup>3</sup> Report of 1876.

<sup>4</sup> The prospective cost was £1500; the actual cost £2000, in addition to the value of the site given by Mrs. Fearn.

purpose, which will also be a pleasure, is announced to help the "funds" in return. "May Mr. Hedley and his people richly prosper together," was the prayer of the Assembly on this occasion, and in the years which have since elapsed the prayer has surely been answered; for Mr. Hedley is still the beloved pastor of his first church, and few men can be credited with a more blameless record of faithful service.

*Grants.*—1875-77, £50. 1878, £40. 1879, £30 or £35. 1880-81, £40. 1882, £30.

### Brinksway.

Mission services in this district were first held in connection with the Tabernacle Church during the pastorate of the Rev. Isaac Hall (1884-91). The place of meeting was a room belonging to the Stockport Sunday school. For a time he made himself responsible for its support, but in June 1888 applied to the District Committee for pecuniary help "to secure better supplies." Thereupon it was resolved that a grant of £20 be recommended—a resolution which, in the following January, took the form that the grant be given "to the Congregational Church that works the Mission—Mr. Hall contemplating withdrawal from the Mission." Nothing came of this at the time, and Mr. Hall did not withdraw. In January 1890 he is spoken of as "*now* honorary pastor of the Brinksway Mission, having Mr. Clifford working under him as an evangelist." He is, however, anxious "that the said Mission should have the recognition of the Union," and that either the Union directly or through Hanover Chapel should take it up in his place. The District Committee were unanimously in favour of its being worked by "Hanover."<sup>1</sup> A year later (January 1891) Mr. Hall was still in charge, and reported the continued receipt of £50 a year from Mr. Joseph Leigh for work in Brinksway, which was then conducted by a student from Nottingham Institute. In April 1892 the Rev. H. Harries brought the case before the annual Assembly—by leave of the Executive—reporting that the place had "an average attendance of 150 people on Sunday evenings," and that Mr. M. H. Sharples, late of Nottingham Institute, was in charge as pastor and evangelist. His request for help was answered by a grant of £30, to be paid through himself, "the friends of the Mission having undertaken to raise £50 themselves for the support of the ministry."

<sup>1</sup> "Hanover" seems not to have taken it up as a church.

In 1893 Mr. Harries could report the raising of nearly £1000 for the projected School chapel, inclusive of £100 raised by a sale of work.<sup>1</sup> In 1894 the promises are said to have reached £1250, and the building is expected to be ready for use "before the year is out." Mr. Harries having removed to London, Mr. Pinn became Chairman of the Building Committee. The expected "opening" took place in March 1895.<sup>2</sup> The "new and commodious church," it is said, will seat "400 worshippers"; the cost is £1800, of which £1300 is in hand; and the Union expresses its sympathy with the enterprise by increasing the grant from £30 to £40.<sup>3</sup> In 1896 the Report marks progress all round, except in the reduction of the debt. The church members are 50 instead of 30; the evening congregations average from 150 to 200, and a large amount of work goes on during the week. The grant is raised to £45, in view of the financial strain upon a poor people. In 1897 this amount is renewed, and satisfaction expressed that £100 has been raised towards clearing off the debt of £500. In 1898 it is reported that, in the previous April, Sunday school work was begun and has met with unexpected success, a start of 20 scholars having grown to 65, under eight teachers. In 1899 the number has risen to 140, and there is great need felt for a new school-room. In other ways, too, the state of things is encouraging. The only drawback has been in the loss of Mr. Sharples by his removal to Glossop. This drawback showed itself, we learn from the Report of 1900, both "financially and in attendance." But with the settlement of the Rev. A. Carter<sup>4</sup> in July 1899 "improvement set in all round," and it may be safely said that such "improvement" has been sustained. Year by year the Report is to the same effect—good congregations, great activity during the week, cordial attachment on the part of the people to their minister, and a united desire "for hard work."

In 1902 £500 was spent in the purchase of a hall "for Sunday school and social work," all but £150 being in hand. In 1904 it is reported that a recent bazaar, by which upwards of £400 was realised, has more than extinguished the debt on school and chapel; and that, "although the ordinary income for the year has suffered," a reduced grant of £35 is asked.<sup>5</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Pinn says "Hanover" gave some £300, he thinks, from a bazaar fund.

<sup>2</sup> By Mr. Harries. On February 19 a church had been formed under the presidency of Mr. Pinn. On April 16 the church formally invited Mr. Sharples to the pastorate; in December he was ordained.

<sup>3</sup> Report of 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Late "evangelist" at Partington, in connection with the Bowdon Church. He was ordained on November 9.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1896 it had stood at £45.



amount was readily voted, and has not yet been reduced further; but it is quite certain that the church at Brinksway means to become self-supporting, and will attain this goal ere long. The only hindrance lies, not in their want of will, but in the poverty of the district.

In fact, the Union has good reason to be proud of Brinksway as one of its stations where the success has been conspicuous and unbroken; but it should be added that this result has flowed to some extent from the happy working of what the Report for 1903 calls "an experiment." When the church was formed in 1895 its members were persons who had not had any previous knowledge or experience of Congregational methods. "By a friendly arrangement," therefore, "it was agreed that three deacons from neighbouring churches should be associated with the deacons of the newly formed Brinksway Church as advisory deacons." The arrangement thus made proved itself of the greatest service and continued for eight years. Two of the three, Messrs. Bragg and Machin, acted throughout, and said in retiring: "At all times both deacons and people have been exceedingly hearty in taking and acting upon any advice and suggestion . . . given to them; and they have never in the slightest degree considered such to be interference." Even during the time when the pulpit was vacant—"a critical period which tries severely our best and strongest churches"—the arrangement worked admirably, no doubt partly because the advisory deacons were men of tact who "always bore in mind" that they were dealing with "an Independent church, and that anything said" must be "in the way of advice and not of dictation." The experiment was not quite so rare as the Report seems to suppose—it was pretty common in the earlier days of Independency—but one can cordially approve the suggestion that "young and weak churches" would often do well to adopt it "until they are strong enough to take the responsibility upon themselves."

*Grants.*—1892-94, £30. 1895, £40. 1896-1903, £45. 1904-06, £35.

### Great Moor (Buxton Road).

The steps taken in the founding of this church were as follows: On January 15, 1891, at the instance of Rev. H. Ward Price (minister of Wycliffe Chapel), the District Committee resolved to start cottage meetings under the direction of the

Revs. T. W. Pinn, H. W. Price, E. Hedley, S. Hinds, and G. D. Hughes.

In January 1892 a committee<sup>1</sup> of laymen and ministers was nominated to secure a site and a temporary building. At the same time it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. Price, "that the Executive be asked to set aside £25 for the proposed work at Great Moor." There is nothing to show that this request was made, and the project hung fire for a year or two. But a site was obtained by 1894, and an iron building was erected in 1896. The reference to this in the Report tells us that it would accommodate 200 persons, that its cost was about £280, and that over £150 had been promised. The Union made a grant of £50 towards the working expenses. In 1897 the grant was £60, and the Report says that a church was formed the previous September, that there is a flourishing Sunday school and Christian Endeavour Society, and that the building is well filled on Sunday evenings.

The church had found its first minister in Rev. S. Hinds, late of Hazel Grove, and under him it soon set itself to raise a fund towards providing a permanent place of worship. The new chapel was begun in 1899 and opened in the autumn of 1900. A bazaar, held in October 1902, realised £647, and this, combined with other contributions, reduced the debt to £1954. This heavy burden has since been lessened to some extent by dint of persistent efforts, but still amounts to £1466, and must necessarily have a depressing effect. More might have been achieved, perhaps, but for the expenditure of £200 on an organ in 1903—which it seemed impossible to do without—and a ground rent of £15, which, after being paid by local friends for four years, has had to be paid by the church since 1899. The church, nevertheless, has fully justified its existence. The progress reported year by year has been considerable and continuous. "Church, congregation, Sunday school, Band of Hope, Christian Endeavour Society, and income—all," says the latest Report, "show an increase." There is large scope for work in so rapidly growing a neighbourhood, and good work is being done; but the people "sorely stand in need of help," nor can they fairly be expected to make a very rapid advance until the help they need is forthcoming. It must come, however, from quarters other than the County Union, which has already done its utmost. For, following up the £50 of 1896 and the £60 of 1897, its grants have been for 1898-99, £50; for the

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Colonel M'Clure, Messrs. Wm. Lees, F. R. Robinson, and Jonathan Noden, and the Revs. Pinn, Hedley, Hinds, and Price (the last being convener).

next five years £45, and for the last two years £35. Considering the straitened condition of its funds and its increasing claims, this has been generous treatment.

### Tintwistle.

According to tradition, William Bagshaw, known as the "Apostle of the Peak," was the first to attempt the evangelising of Tintwistle, in Longdendale. This may take us back to the time when Mr. Bagshaw was Vicar of Glossop (1651-62), or to any time before his death (March 1702); for after 1662 he lived at Ford, near Chinley, on his own estate—within range of Tintwistle—and in 1691 signed himself as "Minister of y<sup>e</sup> Gospel in Glossop Parish."<sup>1</sup> He regularly employed "two or three days in every week" in preaching, and "frequently at two or three places on the same day." There can be little doubt, then, but that he visited Tintwistle, though clear evidence is wanting. That Nonconformity had taken root somehow is proved by the alacrity with which a license for Tintwistle and Micklehurst was taken out after the passing of the Toleration Act in 1688. Independency at Tintwistle dates itself from that year; and it is true, at any rate, that a number of persons, animated by practical Independency in their relation to the dominant Church, met for worship from about that year on the site of the present chapel. The place of meeting was an old barn, bought for a small sum in default of ability to build. Here the congregation made a shift to remain till 1763, when "a successful effort was initiated for the building of a new chapel, more capacious and more suitable to the times."

During this first period of seventy years the church had nine ministers—Andrew Gray, who took the oversight soon after 1689 and held it for several years, but then went over to the "Establishment" and became curate at St. Michael's, Mottram, the mother-church of the parish; Reginald Tetlow, ordained at Warrington by the Cheshire classis on 16th June 1702, but actually in charge of the church from before August 1701; Mr. Cowper, "bred up under Mr. Chorlton," who succeeded Mr. Tetlow in May 1703, and left in less than two years;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name is the first of those subscribed to the "Heads of Agreement" by Cheshire ministers.

<sup>2</sup> The people at "Tinsle" applied to the classis in May 1705 for help in obtaining a minister.

Mr. Gilbert Taylor, "recommended to the people at Tinsle" by Matthew Henry "sometime before" August 1705;<sup>1</sup> Mr. Edward Thornton, ordained by the classis at Knutsford on May 5, 1719, but probably minister since the early months of the year preceding;<sup>2</sup> then, after a ministry by Mr. Thornton, extending (possibly) to 1746 or 1747, three nameless and "not happy ones" followed, which bring us to the settlement of the Rev. William Hudson in 1782. The congregation during this early period was large, amounting to (*circ.* 1717) 574 hearers. In fact, hearers came to it from places as far off as Micklehurst,<sup>3</sup> beyond Mossley, and when some of these requested leave to connect themselves with the church at Delph, because of the great distance, they were not allowed. "Thus far we agree," said the answer of the church meeting, "that you may join in the reception of the Supper ordinance with the Protestant Dissenting Church at Delph as occasional members. But hereby you do not disannul or revoke that covenant which you made at your entrance into church-membership with us and with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the Church." There is matter for thought here.

Mr. Hudson was in his twenty-fourth year when his pastorate began in 1782, and he remained faithful to it till the day of his death—"the very day, March 26, 1811, when the old meeting-house (of 1763) was razed to its foundations." In 1788 he founded a Sunday school, the earliest in Cheshire; but, failing to attract the sort of youth for whom it was intended, it was broken up after six years' trial, and nothing further was attempted in the same line during the next ten years. This and other circumstances so depressed him that he would have resigned but for the "intreaties and dissuasions" of his people, combined with those of neighbouring ministers. Hereupon sprang up a revival of true religion, which continued to bear fruit and to cheer his heart to the end. In 1803 the school was resumed and flourished. A curious fact is that at first the Committee of Management "paid two persons to attend regularly to the school." In 1814 one master was dispensed with, a sufficient staff of voluntary teachers having been educated and trained. A little later female teachers were introduced; and then a day

<sup>1</sup> He was not ordained till March 29, 1710, and then privately in Mr. Angier's house (minister of Duckinfield) by himself, Mr. Jones (Hatherlow), and Mr. Irlam (Congleton).

<sup>2</sup> In May 1718 he presented to the classis his credentials as a candidate for ordination. Mr. Taylor died in 1716 (Evans MS.).

<sup>3</sup> About five miles across the moor.



school was started in order to leave all the time in the Sunday school free for religious instruction.<sup>1</sup>

When the County Union originated Tintwistle was one of five churches which did not immediately attach themselves. This, however, so far as Tintwistle was concerned, can only have been an oversight, since Mr. Hudson's church was the place in Cheshire where the first draft of Rules for a union of Lancashire and Cheshire churches was read and adopted in August 1806, or perhaps he did not at first approve of the separation between the two counties. Anyhow, Tintwistle shows up well in the first Report (1808) as having contributed £30, 1s. 1½d., in addition to a donation of £10 from Mr. Thorniley; and, though in 1813 it is said to have rendered "no pecuniary aid" "for the last three years or nearly," this is a unique exception to the rule, and is accounted for by the "vacancy" of three years which followed on Mr. Hudson's death. No church in the Union, indeed, has been a more consistent or generous donor to its funds.

Before leaving Mr. Hudson room must be found for an extract from Mr. Evans's "appreciation" of him in the 3rd Report (October 1811): "As a divine those that know and love the divinity of Owen, Manton, Charnock, Howe, and Edwards will believe him entitled to the highest eminence. As a preacher his sermons, for solidity of matter and ingenuity of arrangement, were seldom equalled, probably never excelled. As a scholar his acquisitions were more solid than extensive, but they were truly respectable. As a Christian he had imbibed much of His spirit Who was meek and lowly of heart. As a member of the Union he was a firm pillar, a wise counsellor, a modest advocate, and a most steady friend. As a senior minister in the circle of his brethren he was a candid hearer, a faithful reprover, a sympathising brother. He is taken away from us! May we learn to follow him, as he also followed Christ!"

It was not till September 1815 that a man was found to take his place. This was the Rev. B. Senior, a student from Idle, who was ordained on the 6th day of that month and remained some twelve years. His successor, the Rev. John Cass Potter, occupied the pastorate from 1827 to February 1838, and was the means of greatly increasing both church and school. High testimony is borne to the merits of the Rev. T. J. Davies, who came next, and spent himself freely in the work from May 1838

<sup>1</sup> From MS. by James Rhodes, Esq., communicated by Rev. E. R. Hayton. On the hymn-paper of the fourteenth anniversary of the school (1817) is printed the significant announcement: "*No collection nor instrumental music.*"



until his death on May 20, 1843, aged thirty-nine. The later ministers have been the following :—

|                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| R. G. Milne, M.A.   | from 1844 to 1868. |
| W. H. Denovan, B.A. | „ 1869 to 1873.    |
| J. Oddy             | „ 1875 to 1888.    |
| James Levitt        | „ 1888 to 1893.    |
| Kenneth Mackenzie   | „ 1893 to 1900.    |
| E. R. Hayton, B.A.  | „ 1902 ———         |

Details are not forthcoming, if there were space to record them; but it may be said that Mr. Milne was always a conspicuous supporter of the Union, and that the venerable church at Tintwistle was, perhaps, never more solidly prosperous than it is under the present pastor. Not a little of its prosperity is due, and ever has been due, to devoted lay-helpers—Mr. Joseph Howard, for example, in the present, and Mr. James Rhodes (once a treasurer of the Union) in the past. Mention also should be made of Mr. John Platt, to whose merits a warm tribute is paid in the Report of 1842. “His labours,” it is said, “were abundant. His attachment to the London Missionary Society is well known; to its service he gave up his only son, who now labours in the South Sea Islands. He loved the Cheshire Union, and evinced it by the regularity with which he attended its meetings, the deep interest he felt in its proceedings, the zeal with which he advocated its claims, and the feeling with which he spoke of it and its members in his last hours.” He was a teacher and superintendent, we are told, in the Sunday School for nearly forty years, and for twenty years was not absent more than three times.

In 1837 the chapel, rebuilt in 1811, was enlarged, giving an increase of 200 sittings. It was renovated again in 1891.

In 1836 the Sunday school also was enlarged, and again in 1853. In Mr. Oddy's time a parsonage was provided.

The church is one of the few old Presbyterian foundations which, while retaining its orthodoxy, has retained some old endowments; but no exact information as to their origin is obtainable.

### Whaley Bridge.

Work here originated in 1869. On June 28 a letter was read to the District Committee from the Rev. J. W. Benson, of Marple Bridge, stating that Mr. Robert Ashworth, formerly of

Bainford, had come to reside at Whaley Bridge ; that, in response to his anxious desire for Congregational services, Mr. Balshaw, of Furness Vale, Mr. Ogle, of New Mills, and the writer, had agreed with him to rent a room belonging to the railway company and to become responsible for the initial expense of £20 for "fittings" ; but that aid was needed towards the payment of supplies. The Committee at once resolved to recommend a grant of £20—"its disposal" to be in the hands of a committee consisting of the Revs. Benson, Balshaw, Ogle, and Messrs. Ashworth and Pope. On January 3, 1870, Mr. Benson reported great success in all respects—room filled, a school formed of 50 or 60, "many attracted to the services who had not usually attended anywhere, tracts circulated regularly in the neighbourhood and a noble band of workers."

In March the District Committee followed up a statement by Mr. Ashworth by resolving to recommend a grant of £30 without, and of £60 with, a settled pastor—if the congregation would raise another £60. In April the Assembly voted £25 and urged union with Furness Vale. Mr. Balshaw's resignation of the latter prevented this, but Whaley Bridge still thought of securing a minister and considered itself able to raise the stipulated £60. In June 1871, however, Mr. Ashworth submitted to the District Committee a proposal to substitute "evangelist" for "pastor," as more practicable, and promised £40 in the name of the people if the Union would add a second £40. It was resolved to recommend this. But in September a letter from Mr. Benson (now of Chinley) announced that Mr. Ashworth had left ; that the endeavour to find a suitable evangelist had failed ; and that *he* had been requested to take the place in hand. He proposed to preach at Whaley on alternate Sunday evenings ; to preside at a week evening service on Wednesdays ; and to "fill up" with local preachers—"to whom a small sum would be paid." Would the Union be willing to continue the grant of £40—at least "till next April" ? "After some deliberation" a grant at the rate of £30 was voted "until April," on condition that the people contributed at the rate of £10. The Assembly on April went £5 better—making the grant £35 if the people raised £15. Two years later (1874) the grant was £40, provided the people raised £25 ; and in 1875 it was £45 on the same terms. Meanwhile so prosperously had the work gone on under Mr. Benson that the cry now was for a new chapel—the railway room being filled on Sunday nights and often uncomfortably crowded. In 1876 Mr. Benson writes<sup>1</sup> : "We have been trying to obtain a site for

<sup>1</sup> Report for 1876.

a new chapel but have not been successful. The Mechanics' Institute has not yet been finished. As soon as it is ready for use we intend to apply for it for Sunday services, and have no doubt that we shall obtain it. If the Union will bear with this congregation a little longer, I think they will be amply repaid by seeing in future years a flourishing Congregational church in Whaley Bridge." On the Wednesday night following the last Sunday in March 1879, when he preached his last sermon, Mr. Benson died suddenly—in the prime of life—"having laboured for nearly a quarter of a century, first at Marple Bridge and then at Chinley—two places not far apart on the Derbyshire border adjoining Cheshire." He was well known to a circle of friends in both counties. He was a laborious minister and a most genial and kindly man. At the date of his death the congregation still met in the railway room, though the Mechanics' Institute had for some time been available,<sup>1</sup> and no further step towards a new chapel had been taken beyond securing a site, nor did it quickly proceed to fill Mr. Benson's place. But in the course of 1880 the Rev. J. T. Barker, B.A., late of Duckinfield and then residing at New Mills, undertook the oversight, and found the difficulties so great that he "was almost prepared to recommend the Union to give up" the place.<sup>2</sup> This was at the end of his first year. Then "a decided improvement" seemed to set in, and Mr. Barker (backed up by his zealous senior deacon, Mr. Kirk) resolved to hold on. A year later (April 1883), the "improvement" has apparently vanished, and Mr. Barker continues to give his assistance only "at the urgent request of the church." But before April 1884 he has become "much encouraged." "The congregations are good and the contributions have been more liberal. There have also been several additions to the church, and others are waiting to be received." Moreover, there is talk again of "a new sanctuary," and £350 is actually promised, "without canvassing," towards the £600 which it is expected to cost. So we read in the Report of 1886. We move on another year, and lo! the "project of a new chapel" has been abandoned. Mr. Barker considers "the scheme to have been at least premature"—nay, considers that the state of things generally is no better than it was six years ago. After this it is no surprise to find that Mr. Barker resigned in 1888, that the congregation fell back on "supplies," and that the grant lapsed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Institute was made use of from 1880 to 1884.

<sup>2</sup> Report for 1882.

<sup>3</sup> Though for 1889 £20 was placed in the hands of a sub-committee for its use—if required. It was not.

The only reference to Whaley Bridge for the next twelve years is in two minutes of the District Committee—one (January 1890) requesting "Revs. Pinn and Paul to take a kindly interest in Whaley Bridge," and one (September 1890) recording Mr. Pinn's report "that Whaley Bridge was still going on with supplies." At length in 1901 it again asked help towards obtaining "the services of a settled minister," and the Union voted £40. In the same year an invitation was accepted by the Rev. Llewellyn Porter, late of Hastings, and "the foundation-stone of a new chapel was laid."<sup>1</sup> This—with a church of 23 members, a congregation of 60, a Sunday school of 150, and a self-raised income of £60—made things look bright. The revival was due, in a very large degree, to the modest, unflagging efforts of Mr. A. Gibson (an immigrant from Wellington Road, Stockport); but he died suddenly in 1902, and, though the chapel was opened and the work went on, the church staggered under his loss. To the pastor especially it seemed irreparable. Mr. Porter came for a specified period of three years, and accordingly retired at the end of March 1905. A sub-committee of the Executive, acting with the deacons, has since had the oversight. "Recently arrangements have been made for six months with a lay pastor," Mr. J. J. Singleton, and through his efforts "the general tone of the church work has considerably improved." It is felt, however, by all concerned that this can be only a temporary relationship, and that "at as early a date as possible a suitable minister should be appointed."

*Grants.*—1869, £18, 15s. (received up to March 1870). 1870, £25 (£40 with Furness Vale). 1871, £25 without, £60 with minister. 1872-73, £35 (the church to raise £15). 1874, £40 (the church to raise £25). 1875, £45 (the church to raise £25). 1876, £40 (the church to raise £20). 1877, £30 (at the discretion of the Executive). 1878, £30. 1879, £20 or £25 (to commence on entry to a better meeting-place). 1880, £25. 1881-82, £40. 1883-86, £25. 1887, £20 (at the discretion of the Executive). 1901, £40 (with a minister). 1902-04, £40. 1905-06, £40 (with a minister).

## Wilmslow.

The facts about Nonconformity in this village and the offshoot at Dean Row have been brought together elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Its present flourishing Congregational church dates from 1844, when, at the

<sup>1</sup> Report of 1902. Opened in 1902; clear of debt by 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Urwick, pp. 260-277, and "Manual of the Church, 1880."

instance of Dr. Somerville, of Hawthorn Hall, services were commenced in a room which he hired and fitted up for the purpose. A small church, of which the Rev. William Crease became pastor, was the speedy outcome. At first the movement had to face opposition from the Established Church, but was happy to find a warm friend in Mr. John Jenkins, of Fulshaw Hall, who gave a plot of land towards a chapel and contributed generously towards the building fund. This chapel, erected in 1846, with accommodation for 350 persons, had become too small by 1865, and was then enlarged. Six years earlier school-rooms were built at a cost of £500. Wilmslow is mentioned for the first time in the Report of 1847 as one of five<sup>1</sup> churches receiving a pecuniary grant from the Union's "missionary funds." It had a membership at that time of some thirty persons. In 1849 Mr. Crease reported good progress—a membership of 32, an average morning congregation of 125 and evening of 140, and a Sunday school of 150 on the books, with 12 teachers. "The prayer meeting on Monday evenings is attended only by a few (20) of the more zealous members of the church and congregation, but a goodly number meet at a Bible class on Wednesday evening," and a "moveable cottage lecture" on Thursday evening attracts many hearers. The church is united; the pastor spends "several hours every day in missionary labour, visiting from door to door"; and sometimes, on winter Sunday evenings, the chapel has been quite full. Nevertheless, in December 1849, Mr. Crease resigned, to the deep regret, at any rate of his brother-ministers, who in their district meeting, held<sup>2</sup> a month before the resignation took effect, passed a resolution eulogistic of his "indefatigable zeal and great success." Something evidently had gone wrong; but Mr. Crease's removal was no check to progress, as the "friends" at Wilmslow are careful to make clear.<sup>3</sup>

His successor was the Rev. Samuel Ellis, formerly of Duke's Alley Chapel, Bolton, who settled in December 1850, and at once showed himself the right man for the place; so that, under him, the church became almost immediately self-supporting. "We are happy," announce the "friends" in 1851, "to express our thankfulness to Almighty God for the blessings He has showered upon us. In His wise and kind providence He has sent us a pastor who, by his able and faithful ministrations, is drawing numbers to our chapel. We are thus enabled to take upon ourselves the support of the Gospel in this place, and to cease to be pensioners on the bounty of the Society. We grate-

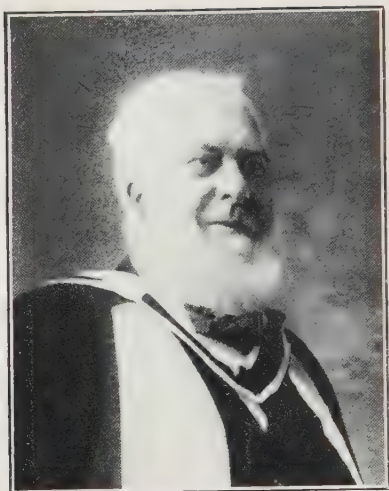
<sup>1</sup> The others were Hazel Grove, Parkgate, Malpas, and Bucklow Hill.

<sup>2</sup> At Tintwistle, November 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Report, 1849.







Mr. Alderman THOMPSON



Mr. JOSEPH WOOD.

fully acknowledge the obligations we are under for the pecuniary assistance received; and trust that the said obligations will be eventually cancelled by the contributions of the *nursling* to the funds of the Society"—an implied promise which has been well redeemed. Mr. Ellis died on February 26, 1865, the very day when the chapel was re-opened.

The Rev. Watson Smith came next, in the following year, and remained till his death in May 1878. He was so exceptional a man that one is not surprised to meet with the following tribute to him<sup>1</sup> in the Report of 1879: "It will be long, very long, before we know how much we all lost in the death of Watson Smith. He was endowed with an intellect of remarkable power and still more remarkable breadth, richness, and originality. But great as his intellectual gifts undoubtedly were, they were overshadowed, and perhaps to some extent hidden, by a moral nature of marvellous depth and intensity. He was a poet in the vividness of his feelings and the glowing intensity of his mind, and, had he possessed powers of expression in an equal degree he would have taken rank among the foremost men of his generation. But most precious to all his friends is the recollection of his loving spirit, so kindly and yet so bright with the humour that gave so rich a colouring to all he said. Anybody could feel at home with Watson Smith, so gentle was he, so tender, so sympathetic, so childlike, so guileless. During these later years there was a great glow of religious feeling, that imparted such a glory to the many aspects of his character as one has seen sometimes kindled on the slopes of a great mountain when the evening sun has sown its woods and scarred rocks and belts of grass with golden light. Of few men could it be said with greater truth, and few lives and deaths would it more truly depict, what was said of Enoch, 'And Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him.'"

Wilmslow's fourth minister was the Rev. Stuart J. Reid, of Broughton, Manchester, who had the oversight from March 1880 to 1887, when he removed to Chiselhurst and devoted himself to literary work. His successor, the Rev. J. B. Aitken, of Milton Church, Rochdale, took up the work in the spring of 1889 and carried it on till 1902. The present minister, the Rev. H. W. Turner, B.A., from Mawdsley Street Church, Bolton, accepted the charge in 1904. Of this church Joseph Thompson, J.P., Alderman of the city of Manchester and an honoured leader in all that tends to its progress, has been a member since 1865. His record as a supporter of the Union goes back at least ten

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless by Rev. T. Robinson, Secretary of the Union.

years earlier, and no one has rendered to it a longer or a more constant and intelligent service.

*Grants.*—1845, not stated. 1847, £40. 1848, £20. 1849-51, £35. No Reports were issued for the intervening years. No doubt the grant was £35 after the first or second year.

### MORLEY.

Morley, described in 1880 as a small hamlet of farm-houses and cottages, and not much more than that now, contains an offshoot of the Fulshaw Church, which goes back to seed sown by Mr. Benjamin Pearson and Mr. Robert Crewdson, in occasional services which they held after the Methodists had left the field. In 1864 a Sunday school class was formed, and services and prayer meetings were held in one of the cottages. On Mr. Crewdson's removal from the district the good work was entrusted to the Fulshaw Church, who took it up enthusiastically, and determined to build a chapel. Obstacles arose from the fact that the steward of Sir Humphrey de Trafford—the landed proprietor—refused to sell for such a purpose; and these obstacles blocked the way until at last "a cottage and a small plot of land," owned by a Mr. Henshall, were found to be procurable and were bought. So the chapel was built in 1869, with sittings for 200 persons.

Wilmslow has always been its mainstay, alike in respect of finance and workers. The parent-church supplies it with teachers and occasional preachers. There is one pastor for the two places and one church roll. The Sunday school has been a chief feature, and reports this year 102 scholars with 12 teachers. One of its teachers and superintendents for twenty years was that most amiable Christian, Mr. Joseph Wood. He was so much the general overseer of the work at Morley that he became commonly known as "Bishop of Morley." He was also a deacon at Wilmslow for nearly thirty years, and his long service at Knolls Green was such as to induce the friends there to call their new school "The Joseph Wood Memorial School." He was treasurer of the Union from 1887 to 1890, and again from 1890 to 1897; and chairman in 1892. He died at the age of seventy-nine, on March 9, 1900, an event which drew forth from the Assembly in April a singularly marked expression of esteem and sorrow. His strength lay in his abounding kindliness. Those who missed him most were the sick and sorrowful; for he had learnt so well how to "weep with them that weep."

## DUCKINFIELD (PROVIDENCE CHAPEL).\*

There is no "Providence Chapel" now. Its site is occupied by the present "Crescent" chapel built in 1866. But when the Cheshire Union was formed Duckinfield—one of its first adherents—meant "Providence Chapel," and the connection was kept up till the end. The place originated in 1805 with Mr. Wm. Marsh, who preached first in a dwelling-house, then in an out-building said to have been attached to his shop. Recent attempts to establish a Congregational church at Ashton had, so far, come to grief; and Mr. Marsh's experiment owed much of its success to additions from the Ashton Independents. A chapel became necessary and was built in 1806. On the first day of 1807 "opening" services were conducted by Rev. W. Evans, of Stockport, Rev. W. Roby, of Manchester, and Rev. Noah Blackburn, of Delph. Mr. Marsh was ordained in the ensuing May, and remained pastor till the midsummer of 1808. His subsequent pastorates were Cannon St., Manchester, and Charlesworth, Derbyshire. The Rev. Thomas Bennett, of Congleton, succeeded him in November, and was minister for ten years—removing to Hatherlow, his last and longest charge, in 1818. Mr. Bennett was a zealous evangelist, and, doubtless on that account, an ardent friend of the Union. We read in the first Report how "a respectable friend at Lawton Salt Works has licensed his house for preaching," and that it was first opened by Mr. Bennett, of Congleton, June 7, 1808; also, in the second how "Brother Bennett of Duckinfield" has "opened a place for preaching on the neighbouring hamlet of Newton"; and again in the fifth how he has interested himself keenly in a new "cause" at Hyde Lane. So, too, at Hatherlow he always had on hand several preaching stations in the neighbourhood, and made frequent visits to places farther off. He records that during the period from January 6, 1828, to October 9, 1842, the Sunday before his death, he preached 7400 times and used 1875 sermons. He also gives a list of the places visited—revealing a passion for itinerant work that makes one think of Job Wilson!

Coming back to Duckinfield—some disputes about church discipline led to a serious secession during his time.<sup>1</sup> A Mr. Dunkerley and then a Mr. Ramsey succeeded him for brief periods. In September 1827, when the Rev. Robert Ivy, the

<sup>1</sup> Fourteen members "recrossed the river" and helped to form the nucleus of the present Albion Church at Ashton.



new minister, took charge, he came to "an almost extinguished interest." Under him it revived. In 1833 he could report a church membership of about 40, and congregations ranging from 150 to 200, though even then the total income did not amount to £50 per annum; and before his death in 1841,<sup>1</sup> besides the building of a schoolroom and parsonage, the chapel needed to be enlarged. But three years of decadence followed before the settlement of the last minister, Mr. Farnsworth; and with his ministry in 1861 the church expired—some of its members joining the church at Furnace Hill (now the "Crescent"), others wandering elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

The Tenth Report (1827-28) says that "Duckinfield has for some time past enjoyed the patronage of the Union," and it was still receiving aid in 1833. Later information is wanting, but it was a contributing church in 1841, and at that time seems to have become self-sustaining.

#### FURNESS VALE.\*

Furness Vale, a village of 700 inhabitants, between New Mills and Whaley Bridge, had no place of worship before 1865. About that time Mr. Charles Saxby, calico printer, opened a commodious room, suitably furnished, for worship, in which services were held every Sunday, morning and evening, the church prayers being used as well as extempore prayer. In August 1865 Mr. Saxby inquired of the District Committee if a grant could be got from the Cheshire fund large enough to support a resident minister, provided £50 were "collected" on the spot? On the report of a deputation (Messrs. A. Clark and W. Urwick) a grant of £50 was recommended. Mr. J. A. Balshaw, a student of Lancashire College, was invited by the congregation to take the pastoral oversight, and a church was formed on Congregational principles in March 1867.<sup>3</sup> At this time there were twenty-four members; the attendance at evening service was fifty-five, and the Sunday school had eighty-two scholars. It was hoped<sup>4</sup> that "this newly-formed Christian

<sup>1</sup> He was killed by being thrown from a coach, on which he was travelling to Southport for his holidays, underneath a passing luggage-train at Exeter level-crossing, Sept. 7, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> So a letter to Mr. Urwick (dated October 19, 1863) from Rev. J. T. Barker, the first minister of Furnace Hill.

<sup>3</sup> In October Mr. Midwood was deputed to see Mr. Kirk, a leading member at Furness, about drawing up a formal agreement for the transfer of the place to the Congregationalists.

<sup>4</sup> 1868 Report.

community" would soon greatly "increase its numbers" "from the thousands of people" resident within two miles of the place. There was some progress; but in 1870 the fear is expressed "that the population immediately contiguous to the place of worship does not appear to admit of any considerable enlargement of the congregation"<sup>1</sup>; and the District Committee is invited to consider "the propriety of uniting this place with Whaley Bridge, under one pastor."<sup>2</sup> It is more than hinted at the same time, that "unless some arrangement of the kind is made, this meeting cannot hold out any hope that the grant will be continued after the present year." Mr. Balshaw was not slow to take the hint, and "intimated" to the District Committee in September "that an arrangement had been made to unite Furness Vale with Whaley Bridge under his pastoral care."

But before March 1871 he had resigned, and the following resolution<sup>3</sup> of the District Committee shows why: "We greatly regret that, owing to the tone of remark at the last annual meeting and to the statements of the Annual Report, the minister of the church at Furness Vale has left, and the room is closed. Still, we are glad that the fruits of our efforts are not likely to be lost, as a new church in connection with the Establishment is in contemplation."

*Grants.*—1865 (for six months, from Michaelmas), £25. 1866, £50. 1867, £50. 1868, £50. 1869, £50. 1870, £40.

### WOOD END.\*

A village half-way between Marple and New Mills.

It was announced, at the annual meeting of the Union in 1865, that the Rev. J. W. Benson, of Marple Bridge, had applied for a grant in aid of services which had been conducted in "a reading room" here for some time past. The case was remitted to the District Committee. This Committee, at its meeting on August 2nd, resolved "that if any neighbouring church" made formal application "specifying what plans" it proposed "to adopt for the supply and working of Wood End," the Committee would consider the matter favourably. Thereupon the Rev. F. Clark wrote to the District Secretary (Mr. Urwick) on November 14th, asking if the Cheshire County Union would "give a grant, say of £10, to Wood End if the Derbyshire Union" would "also give a grant

<sup>1</sup> 1870 Report.

<sup>2</sup> 1870—General Minute-Book.

<sup>3</sup> Moved by Rev. A. Clark; seconded by Rev. J. T. Woodhouse; carried unanimously, March 20.

of £10 to Thornsett, so that the two places could be supplied by students from the Lancashire College." The Committee met next day and agreed to grant £5 "towards the supply of Wood End for the ensuing six months," the grant to "be disbursed by a sub-committee consisting of the Revs. F. Clark, of New Mills, Simpson, of Marple, and Drakeford, of Marple Bridge." In the following March it was reported that the Sunday evening service had an average attendance of thirty, in a room seating eighty, and the Committee resolved to recommend a grant of £15. The Union, at its meeting in April, granted £10, and renewed it in 1867. Then in March 1868 the Committee, having heard the schedule from Wood End, resolved that it was not in their "power to do anything further in connection with this station at present," and so the grant dropped.

A considerable change, not for the better, must have taken place during the previous fifteen months; for in January 1867 Mr. Simson, of Marple, had earnestly pleaded for further aid on the ground that the Rev. Mr. Hall was actively working the station, in conjunction with Thornsett; and that, although the "Strines Company" (of calico printers) had opened a room for Episcopal worship and engaged the services of a curate, yet this movement was of "uncertain continuance," whereas "our station" was of long standing and had recently received "two valuable accessions." As a matter of fact, the station is noted as among those of the Stockport district till 1886.

## WIRRAL DISTRICT (1888-1906)

### SECRETARIES.

|                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Rev. J. G. Deaville . . . . | 1888-1890 |
| Rev. J. Pedlar . . . .      | 1890-1898 |
| Rev. J. C. Neil, B.D. . . . | 1898-1904 |
| Rev. W. Eaton Thomas . . .  | 1904- —   |

*N.B.*—Some facts about this district are remarkable. In 1811 it was considered to be a dreary, barren spot so far as the work of the Union was concerned; and the two places, Parkgate and Sutton, which afterwards seemed hopeful, had to be abandoned. It is now, for its size, the most flourishing field of Congregationalism in the county—with eight strong churches, not counting those outside the Union and stations; and with no aided church—though including five that have outgrown the need of aid.

In this district, moreover, our churches appear to be unusually awake to opportunities of extension. Most of them are comparatively recent, and owe their origin to the enterprise which knows how to take occasion by the hand. We learn from the district minute-book that attention has also been directed to other places, *e.g.* Bidston Hill, Lower and Higher Bebington, West Kirby, as possible openings. And if nothing has been done, the reasons for inaction are good, either, as in the case of Bidston Hill, because the price of land is at present prohibitive; or, as in the case of the two Bebingtons, because the religious needs of the people are otherwise sufficiently met; or, as in the case of West Kirby, because the nearest church (Hoylake) is not yet able to give the necessary assistance.

In short, the position and outlook of our work in the Wirral are a matter for thankfulness, and much of the credit is undeniably due to the Union.

(My authority for the last paragraph is Mr. Frederick Wood, Tranmere.)

## Birkenhead (Hamilton Square).

THIS chapel (called Woodside) dates from 1838, when its opening services (on October 16th) were conducted by Revs. Dr. Raffles, Samuel Luke, of Chester, and Dr. Carruthers, of Liverpool. A church was constituted on 26th February 1839. Its first pastor, the Rev. R. Cope, a student of Airedale College, was ordained in the following October, and seceded to the Established Church in 1841. Its second pastor, the Rev. William O'Hanlon, remained from April 1842 till towards the

end of 1845. Its third pastor, the Rev. H. D. Knowles, resigned in 1849, and the church was dissolved. On February 9, 1852, it was reconstituted, and a call given to the Rev. James Mann, who continued in the pastorate for twenty years. He was succeeded in 1873 by the Rev. E. Pringle, who removed to Keighley in 1884. From the end of that year till the early part of 1888 the Rev. R. Herbert Sewell, B.A.,<sup>1</sup> of Cheshunt College, was minister. The next six years (1888-94) were occupied by the ministry of the Rev. Henry Gardner, late of New College and Broseley. At the end of 1895 the Rev. Edward William Lewis, M.A., now pastor of Grafton Square, Clapham, took charge. At the beginning of 1898 he removed to Swan Hill, Shrewsbury; and after a seven months' vacancy, the present minister, the Rev. H. H. Attwell, of Tamworth, set himself to the work.

The church appears in the list of the Cheshire Union onwards from 1868, but marked as "connected with Lancashire Union." It was admitted to the former in April 1882, near the close of Mr. Pringle's pastorate. It came on the Union's Fund in 1896. From its letter of application to the District Committee in the previous October some idea may be gathered of its circumstances. The church had forty-five "effective" members; the average attendance at the Sunday services was about seventy; £80 was the utmost it could guarantee to raise for the ministry; and the edifice stood in great need of repair.<sup>2</sup> A grant of £60 was asked for, and £50 was recommended. But, being already deep in debt, the Union could not possibly exceed £30; and but for the quite recent "improvement all round," which had followed on the advent of Mr. Lewis, might hardly have felt it right to vote anything. The special difficulties of the church arise from its situation in a district which is ceasing to be what is called "residential." But there are plenty of people about, and, under Mr. Attwell's leadership, the way to reach these seems to have been discovered. Thus in the Report of 1902 we read: "The work of the church is now beginning to tell upon the neighbourhood. The congregations have improved and the contributions increased. The P.S.A. and its associated societies have had a prosperous year. Mothers' and ladies' sewing meetings have been held. The reading-room and penny bank continue to render good service. To the numerous agencies already at work a Good Templar Lodge has been added." The place, in fact, was alive again with a life wisely directed; and so the

<sup>1</sup> Went to Reading, then (in 1903) to Great George Street, Liverpool.

<sup>2</sup> During 1896 £120 was spent for this, Liscard and Oxtou Road each contributing £20.



announcement in 1903, that it no longer asked for a grant, came as no surprise.

*Grants.*—1896–99, £30. 1900, £35. 1901, £35. 1902, £35.

### Oxton Road, Birkenhead.

This church originated in Grange Lane, in a small chapel which the Associated Methodists had vacated. The first services were held on the 17th June 1855, and for three months were in charge of the Rev. Richard Thompson, B.A., of New College, London. He was followed “for a short time” by the Rev. D. W. Simon, now Principal of the United College, Bradford. The Rev. F. S. Williams,<sup>1</sup> formerly of New College, was the first pastor. He began his ministry on January 1, 1856; in February the Rev. Dr. Raffles, Professor Griffiths, and others presided at the constitution of a Congregational church, and in May Mr. Williams was ordained. It was expected from the outset that a new chapel would soon be required, and to this end a site, central to a rapidly growing neighbourhood, was secured. Those useful Chapel Building Societies, named the “Liverpool” and the “English Congregational,” backed up by gifts and loans the liberal contributions of friends on the spot; and at length the reward of much patient effort and self-sacrifice stood forth in “a very handsome structure,” which was opened on 22nd June 1858.<sup>2</sup> The structure comprehended a school-house<sup>3</sup> as well as a church, and the cost of the whole amounted to £5475.

At the annual meeting of the Union in April 1861 Oxton Road was, with the minister, welcomed to its membership. In July of the same year Mr. Williams resigned, and till the next spring the pastorate was vacant. Things so far had, it would seem, not quite answered to the hopes of sanguine pioneers. The field was being entered by the Baptist brethren, the United Presbyterians, and the Wesleyans, and, no doubt, their emulative activity retarded increase. The Rev. Charles Goward, a student from Airedale, became the second pastor in May 1862, but resigned in the course of 1864.<sup>4</sup> In 1865 the Rev. Frederick Barnes, B.A., of Morley, near Leeds, entered upon a ministry which lasted till

<sup>1</sup> He afterwards became one of the tutors at the Nottingham Institute.

<sup>2</sup> By Dr. Raffles and Dr. Stoughton (of London).

<sup>3</sup> The Sunday school had been formed in September 1855.

<sup>4</sup> In February 1863 the first deacons (four) were elected. A committee had managed affairs till then.

his removal to Chester in June 1879. In 1875 the Union held its annual meetings at Birkenhead for the second time,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Barnes was chairman, his address on the occasion being inspired by the Moody and Sankey revival movement, then in full swing.<sup>2</sup> He was succeeded by the Rev. S. Hester, of Banbury, who did not stay long. Coming in January 1880 he left in December 1883, and the Rev. J. G. Deaville, of New Road, Bury, took his place in December of the year following. He withdrew to reside at Southport in 1889, still for a time "conducting the secretarial work of Wirral District,"<sup>3</sup> and "after a somewhat lengthy vacancy" the church invited the Rev. Matthew Stanley, of Laisterdyke, in May 1892. He remained for thirteen years, and then, in April 1905,<sup>4</sup> removed to Upper Chapel, Heckmondwike.

Oxton Road through all these years had, though with fluctuating fortune, been steadily gathering strength, and not least so under Mr. Stanley's oversight. But he deserves especial mention here as an excellent friend of the Union. Several proofs of this statement might be adduced, particularly the fact that the contributions of his church to the Union more than doubled themselves between 1892 and 1905; and a commendable feature in the case is, that the increase came mainly through an enlarged list of personal subscribers—for example, in 1900 there were nearly forty of these. It was Mr. Stanley, too, who suggested and urged the establishment of an "Annual" County Union Day in connection with the Wirral district. Much, therefore, of the vivid interest in the Union, which has become widespread through the Wirral churches, may be due to him. Oxton Road has just found a successor to Mr. Stanley in the Rev. W. L. Carter, M.A., of Hopton, Mirfield, Yorkshire, who began his ministry in October (1906).

### Prenton.

Prenton—in a district, rapidly developing, between Rock Ferry and Birkenhead—owes its origin to "the earnest and self-sacrificing efforts" of the Rev. James Wishart, M.A., who opened services here in October 1887, in a pavilion hired for the purpose, and

<sup>1</sup> Held first in 1863.

<sup>2</sup> During his pastorate the chapel was cleared of its debt of £2000, and the membership greatly increased.

<sup>3</sup> In March 1888 new schools were opened and tower of church completed.

<sup>4</sup> New schools were erected in 1903, costing £3800, and opened free of debt.

for the next eighteen months did the part of an honorary pastor. A prolonged illness obliged him to leave home, and the "cause" consequently suffered. Its committee, however, still carried on the work as best it could, and the Union readily made a grant of £60 in April 1889 to sustain what seemed so promising an enterprise. The disbursement of the grant was entrusted to the District Committee, who had nominated two of its members (the secretary, Rev. Joshua Pedlar, and Rev. Henry Gardner) to co-operate with the local committee, and otherwise manifested a sympathetic desire to establish things on a sound basis.<sup>1</sup> On Friday, April 18, 1890, a "school-chapel, at once substantial and picturesque, and capable of seating 220 people," was opened by Dr. Mackennal, and this, together with the return of Mr. Wishart, brought an impetus which enabled the treasurer to report (in January 1891) that the strength of the place was about doubled, both in money and numbers.<sup>2</sup> The grant of £60, which had been renewed in 1890 and 1891, was, at Mr. Wishart's wish, not asked for in 1892. His own services were gratuitous, and what the church needed beyond what itself could raise was secured "through an agreement with the Rock Ferry church."<sup>3</sup> This supplementary aid came to an end in 1895, and Prenton again applied to the Union, backing up its claim by mention of the fact "a place of worship belonging to the Established Church had been opened in the neighbourhood, and drawn off several families on whose support they could formerly rely." £40 was recommended (but £50 voted) on condition that the minister, Rev. Stanley Lamb, who succeeded Mr. Wishart in 1892, had a stipend of not less than £150. The next two or three years were a time of crisis, with increasing signs, however, of a gradual change for the better. In 1899 the report is that "the church is bravely doing its work amid many difficulties." Notwithstanding loss by removals, thirteen new members have been added; the Sunday school is healthy, though not numerous, and a sale of work has enabled them to discharge several small liabilities, to renovate the building, to lay aside £80 for an organ fund, and to augment the minister's stipend. In 1900 Mr. Lamb removed to Burslem, and the Rev. R. S. Franks, M.A., Litt.B., of Mansfield College, became pastor. Circumstances more favourable to success seconded his unusual abilities, and "a great improvement set in." "The church and congregation,"

<sup>1</sup> It secured, for example, the appointment of a good congregational treasurer, Mr. Barron. See District Minute, March 4, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> District Minute, January 12, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> District Minute, January 21, 1896, and Report for same year.

says the Report in 1902, "are so encouraged by the state of things existing amongst them that they are beginning to turn their attention towards the erection of a new chapel." By 1903 the church had come to the verge of independence, and may not need the £15 asked. In January 1904 it was announced at the district meeting that Prenton "now withdrew from the aided list," hoped to return £5 of last year's grant, and expressed "warm thanks for the assistance received in past years." The thanks were well deserved. But for the grants of the Union there was a period, as one of the committee of the church said, when "it would not have been possible to have gone on with the work at Prenton." The Union "saved the work that was begun and enabled the friends to carry it on to the self-sustaining stage."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Franks resigned in September 1904, having undertaken tutorial work at the "Friends" College, Bournville, Birmingham, and after an interval of nearly eighteen months, a successor was found in Mr. J. A. Middleton, of Nottingham Institute.

*Grants.*—1889, £60 (in hands of District Committee). 1890, £60. 1891, £60.

1896, £50. 1897, £55. 1898, £55. 1899, £45. 1900, £35. 1901, £30. 1902, £30. 1903, £15.

### Hoylake.

The church here was formally constituted on 2nd January 1874 by the Rev. Edward Pringle, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead, and the Rev. James Wishart, Toxteth, Liverpool. Its membership consisted of 22 persons—20 by transfer from Hamilton Square and 2 from Ventnor, Isle of Wight. At the same meeting it was resolved to call the Rev. Richard Soper, B.A., to the pastorate. Mr. Soper accepted, and entered on his ministry the following Sunday, 4th January. The first place of meeting was purchased from the Primitive Methodists. It is still in existence, and stands on the Birkenhead Road, at the extreme end of the old village. The cost of this building was entirely defrayed by the end of 1880. In December 1881 a meeting of the church was held to take into consideration the erection of a new building, and at a special church meeting, held in January 1882, it was decided to proceed at once with a school chapel, to cost not more than £1200. The old building was sold soon afterwards to the Wesleyan Methodists for £450, in

<sup>1</sup> Report of 1904.







HOYLAKE.



SEACOMBE.

whose hands it still remains as a mission chapel. A site for the proposed school chapel, and ultimately a church, was secured at the corner of Meols Drive and Station Road. The foundation-stone was laid by Isaac Oliver Jones, Esq., Liverpool, on Friday, 6th June 1884; and the new building was opened on 30th October of the same year by the Rev. Samuel Pearson, M.A., Great George Street, Liverpool. Up to this time the church had belonged to the Lancashire Union, but in April 1885 it sought and obtained admission to the Cheshire Union. Recent secessions on the part of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan elements—the former to a new chapel of their own, and the latter to the old chapel which they had bought—had weakened both congregation and Sunday school considerably. But with a clear eye for the exceptional promise of the church, situated as it was in a district just being connected by a direct line of railway with Liverpool, the Union did not hesitate to make it an exceptionally large grant of £60. In 1886 the same amount was voted, and in 1887 £50. In 1888, however, the report is that the place, so far, has turned out a disappointment. “Two several deputations have been appointed by the Executive, and have visited Hoylake. In consequence of their report it was resolved, after very prolonged consideration at a meeting held on 22nd June last, ‘That no further grant will be recommended to Hoylake unless a very decided improvement take place in the condition of affairs.’”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the church ceased to be a beneficiary of the Union, and so continued till 1895, when changes of a hopeful character induced the church to solicit, and the Union to give, a further measure of aid. The church at this time was without a minister, Mr. Soper having resigned in April 1895. A grant, therefore, of £70 was made “while the church was without a minister, and of £100 with one.” “During the year the Rev. J. C. Neil, M.A., B.D., at the unanimous invitation of the people agreed to supply the pulpit for six months,”<sup>2</sup> and then undertook the pastorate—the membership being 24. For 1896 the grant was £60—to be left in the hands of the Executive. But by the close of the year—so rapidly did things improve—the church had become able to support itself,<sup>3</sup> and this welcome fact was announced to the Union in April 1897. Steady and increasing progress under Mr. Neil’s thoughtful and spiritual ministry necessitated, after a few years, the erection of a larger building. A new and handsome church was begun in November 1904, and opened on

<sup>1</sup> Report for 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Reports for 1895 and 1896.

<sup>3</sup> The weekly offerings had sprung from £144 to £290 (District Minute, January 18, 1897).

18th May 1906 by Dr. John Brown, formerly of Bunyan Meeting, Bedford. The building is constructed of brick and stone in the exterior and red sandstone throughout in the interior, and cost about £7500. It has accommodation for about 600.

*Grants.*—1885 and 1886, £60. 1887, £50 (if church raise another £50). 1895, £70 without, and £100 with, a minister. 1896, £60 (in hands of Executive).

### Liscard.

The chapel here dates from 1842. In that year John Astley Marsden, Esq., of Liscard Castle, a staunch adherent of Great George Street, Liverpool, built it upon his own land at a cost of £1200. He saw the present need of an Independent chapel in the neighbourhood, and believed that the need would grow with the population. Opening services were conducted on September 1, 1842, by Dr. Raffles and Rev. Caleb Morris, of London. There is a story of hero-worship (happily, on the whole, authentic) connected with its origin. Mr. Marsden cherished a great reverence for Dr. Isaac Watts (among other Nonconformist divines), and, lighting one day upon a marble tablet inscribed to his memory, which lay in the yard of some unnamed London builder, found, upon inquiry, that the man had purchased not only this but also the pulpit and Sir Thomas Abney's pew, belonging to Dr. Watt's chapel in Bury Street, St. Mary Axe, recently demolished. Hereupon Mr. Marsden eagerly bought up these relics and transported them into the chapel, which he had already begun to erect at Liscard.<sup>1</sup> In 1843, £800 (raised by subscription) were spent upon extensive alterations,<sup>2</sup> and the building was reopened July 19. The same day a church was constituted, consisting of eleven members. On this occasion the officiating ministers were Principal Robert Vaughan, of Lancashire College, Rev. Wm. Pridie, of Liverpool, and the Rev. S. Luke, of Chester. The first pastor, the Rev. William Lawson Brown, M.A., of Lerwick, Shetland, was ordained on August 1st following. He removed to Mawdsley Street, Bolton, in December 1844, leaving a church membership enlarged to 48. His successor was the Rev. James Le Conteur, of Upway, Dorset, who held the pastorate from April 2, 1846, to November 27, 1849, "when he resigned, and soon after accepted a call to

<sup>1</sup> Pulpit and tablet, at least, are there still.

<sup>2</sup> The upper flooring was removed, the area below pewed, and vestries built. Mr. Marsden also presented a new organ.





Rev. J. H. GWYTHER



Mr J. E. BLUNKARN.



Mr. GEORGE ATKIN, J.P.



the church in Wellington, Somersetshire." The Rev. James Cranbrook, of Stratford-on-Avon, was the third pastor. He entered upon his duties on April 23, 1851, and continued till the autumn of 1864, when he accepted a (second) urgent invitation to Albany Street Church, Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

"It would be difficult to over-estimate the impression which he made upon those who came under his influence; a keen, profound, and fearless thinker, of clear spiritual insight, of great power of expression, and strong personal attractiveness, he attached to himself very closely those who became his loyal and active supporters." During his ministry the building was renovated and improved. An organ<sup>2</sup> was bought from the Church for the Blind, Liverpool. The west window was purchased, and the schools were commenced. These were finished in 1865 at a cost of £1500.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1865 the Rev. W. C. Stallybrass, who had been doing the duties of pastor since Mr. Cranbrook's removal, was invited to take permanent oversight, but could only see his way to comply for one year. In March 1866 an invitation was given to the Rev. J. H. Gwyther, B.A., of Stalybridge, and declined—on the magnanimous ground that, his church being burdened by a debt of £1500 on the new chapel, he would not leave them to struggle with it alone. Hence the Liscard Church had to look elsewhere, and from January 1867 to April 1868 found a minister in the Rev. Leigh Mann, from Railsworth, Stroud. Bad health brought about his resignation, and after an interval of some months, filled up by neighbouring ministers and others, the now enfeebled church turned again to Mr. Gwyther. A call reached him in November, and, by this time feeling free to entertain it, was accepted. Thus, on January 1, 1869, began a ministry, full of usefulness and honour, which has lasted to the present day. Next year (1907) Mr. Gwyther proposes to retire from the work which (at Liscard and Stalybridge) has occupied mind and heart for fifty years, "all spent in Cheshire." It is a great achievement, and bespeaks gifts of no mean order faithfully employed—not least the gift of patient continuance in well-doing—all due, as Mr. Gwyther himself would certainly say, to the grace of God. May his evening be sweet with the blended light of dear retrospect and immortal hope!

As already said, the church was in a feeble state<sup>4</sup> when Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cranbrook did not stay long at Albany Street, and then preached to an "undenominational" congregation. He died in Edinburgh in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Repaired and enlarged in 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Jubilee "Manual of the Church, 1893-94."

<sup>4</sup> Its membership was 47.

Gwyther settled, and manifold difficulties made progress slow at first. The chief of these—viz., an “almost stationary” population, has long since vanished. Church and schools, therefore, have had large scope for development, and full use seems to have been made of the opportunity. In 1870 a day school—destined to become “one of the most successful schools of the district”—was opened. In 1882 a lecture-room was built to furnish convenient accommodation “for senior classes in the Sunday school, for week-night services, and other meetings.” In 1888 mission premises in Field Road were opened and the church enlarged and greatly altered, the total cost being £2300. Since then vestries and porches have been added to the church and a new organ put in, costing £1100. Until 1905 Mr. Gwyther sustained the responsibilities of his office single-handed,<sup>1</sup> but then an efficient co-pastor was appointed, the Rev. W. Major Scott, M.A., of the United College, Bradford. The church, it should be noted, first appears in the list of Cheshire churches in and from 1862, but marked as “connected with the Lancashire Union.” The year of its admission to the Cheshire Union was 1889, and reference is made elsewhere to the admirable system by which a generous support of the Union funds has been secured.

#### LISCARD (FIELD ROAD MISSION, UPPER BRIGHTON).

As an outlet for evangelistic work in the village of Liscard, which is a considerable distance from the church, the Primitive Methodist chapel there was rented in 1879. Here, along with mission services, a Sunday school was established and a Band of Hope. Moreover, to meet the growing needs of the neighbourhood immediately round the church, other services were begun in rooms here and there rented for the purpose. At length, with a view to the latter, it was resolved “to erect mission premises in Field Road, Upper Brighton,” as well as to enlarge and alter the church. By January 1888 the “mission” was ready for use (having cost £300), and at once became a scene of active work. In 1892 the Rev. E. E. Wilkins was appointed as assistant pastor, with special charge of the mission, and after his removal to Bethel Chapel, Bury, in December 1893, the charge was committed to an evangelist, Mr. W. Wallace, who still holds it.

<sup>1</sup> Except for such relief as came by the “assistance” of Mr. Wilkins in 1892 and Mr. Wallace.

## Rock Ferry.

The Rock Ferry Congregational Church, Highfield, began with a service held in the Albert Rooms, Rock Ferry, on October 10, 1869. Dr. Caleb Scott was the preacher. On January 10, 1870, a meeting was held over which the Rev. John Kelly presided, and the church was formally constituted. Twenty-three members were received by letters of transfer from other churches, and eight candidates were nominated. In August of the same year the erection of the church buildings was commenced; on September 29th the church associated itself with the Cheshire Congregational Union, and on October 9th a Sunday school was opened in the Albert Rooms. The next important step was the removal of the infant church to the small lecture hall, the nucleus of the present magnificent suite of buildings, on March 5, 1871. This step was quickly followed by the calling of the first pastor, the Rev. Robert Ashcroft, of Bamford, near Rochdale, who commenced his ministry on August 6, 1871. By November 15th of the same year the church was opened. The ground, which comprises 5013 yards, was the gift of Mr. John Arthur, uncle of Mr. George Arthur, one of the founders of the church. The church seats over 800 people, and, situated in spacious and well-wooded grounds, is one of the most attractive ecclesiastical edifices in the Wirral. Thus in two years after the beginning of the cause adequate premises for public worship were erected at a cost of £8587, 6s. 8d., though the debt was not liquidated until March 31, 1874. The school-room accommodation was completed on March 18, 1879, when the large hall and class-rooms were opened at a cost of £2193, 5s., which was paid off by 1881.<sup>1</sup>

During its history of over thirty-six years the church has had five ministers—viz., the Rev. Robert Ashcroft (from Bamford), 6th August 1871 to 2nd February 1876; the Rev. C. A. Mines, B.A. (from Heckmondwike), 18th March 1877 to April 1895; Rev. E. P. Powell, M.A. (from Shanklin), 6th September 1896 to 24th March 1901; the Rev. T. Hallet Williams (from Sale), 4th October 1903 to 19th February 1904; September 1904, the Rev. Luke Beaumont (from Seaforth), present pastor.

The Rock Ferry Church has had a splendid history as the

<sup>1</sup> Grants of £1000 for the chapel and £250 for the school were received from the Lancashire and Cheshire Building Society (see Society's Report for 1879-80).

mother of Home Mission causes. As early as March 24, 1875, an evangelistic committee was appointed, and mission work was begun in Tranmere and Higher Bebington. In the former district the work has greatly prospered. Beginning in a cottage, removal was made in 1881 to a mission hall erected in Randle Street by the generosity of a lady member of the church. Soon a flourishing cause was established, and the Rev. J. Pedlar was called to the pastorate. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. Knox, M.A. With Mr. Knox's advent proposals to erect a church on Old Chester Road were seriously entertained, and that building was opened on May 17, 1901. The Tranmere Congregational Church was constituted on April 11, 1901, there being ninety-six members, and it became independent and self-sustaining. It is now an aggressive and flourishing church, with its P.S.A., Y.P.S.C.E., and other modern appeals.

The Rock Ferry Church still continues mission work amongst women in the Old Mission Hall, an eminently successful mothers' meeting being held every Wednesday afternoon, conducted by ladies from Rock Ferry.

The work at Higher Bebington, where a temporary structure was erected, was ultimately relinquished to the Wesleyan Methodists.

For a short time the church at Prenton was worked in conjunction with Rock Ferry, the Rev. Stanley Lamb being assistant to the Rev. C. A. Mines, B.A.

Like every other church with a history, that at Rock Ferry owes an immense debt to laymen who consecrated time and wealth to its interests. Some of the founders are still living and are amongst the most regular worshippers to-day. Amongst the first list of members we find the names of Mr. G. Atkin and Mr. J. E. Blenkarn, and amongst those who joined immediately the names of Mr. G. Crow, Mr. J. Hargreaves, Mr. J. Graham, all of whom are still with the church, four being deacons at the present time. It ought, perhaps, to be chronicled that the lady responsible for the Reyner Trust, viz. Mrs. Grant, was a member of this church. There are a considerable number of people scarcely to be called "founders," who have had a long and honourable connection with the church and whose service and generosity have contributed not a little to the prosperity of past years. These and the founders are still seeking to maintain old traditions of ready and adapted service, and it is hoped that the church, which, through long pastoral vacancies and the loss of old friends, has been considerably weakened, will revive again. There are ample signs of this, as the congregations are larger than for many

years past, and the church is regaining its old vigour and interests.<sup>1</sup>

*Grants.*—1870, £25 (see Report of 1871, p. 16). 1871, £40 (with minister).

### Tranmere.

The history of this church is of considerable interest, especially to those responsible for mission stations in urban districts.

In 1874 a few members of the Rock Ferry Congregational Church undertook, on their own initiative, tract distribution and sick visiting in Tranmere, a working-class district situated between Birkenhead and Rock Ferry. In the following year the Rock Ferry Church, then under the pastorate of Rev. Robert Ashcroft, formally appointed a special Committee, composed of the pastor and deacons (*ex-officio*) and other members of the church, to take charge of, organise, and forward the work already commenced. This Committee was known as the "Highfield Evangelistic Mission Committee," and its financial support was derived from the voluntary subscriptions of the members and congregation at Rock Ferry. In 1876 the Committee rented a small house in a street called "Rose Cottages," in which a Sunday school was inaugurated. Soon after, Sunday and week-night services for adults and night-school for senior boys and girls were also held there.

The Rev. C. A. Mines, B.A., came to Rock Ferry in 1877,<sup>2</sup> and during his pastorate the work in Tranmere grew very rapidly. This was largely due to the active part he took in it, as well as to his advocacy of its claims upon his church and congregation. In 1881, chiefly owing to the generosity of Mrs. Frances Grant, a member of the Rock Ferry Church, a mission hall, costing £1170, was erected in Randle Street, a short distance from the Cottage Room. From the first the hall became a centre of great activity and usefulness. For three years following its opening the work was conducted entirely by friends from Rock Ferry, but in 1884 the duties had become so multiplied and onerous that the Committee found it necessary to place a minister in charge, and Mr. Joshua Pedlar, a student of Bristol College, was chosen for the office. In support of this undertaking the Reyner Trust (founded by Mrs. Grant) made an annual payment to the Committee, and this was continued until 1901.

<sup>1</sup> Communicated in substance by Mr. Beaumont.

<sup>2</sup> The Report of 1877 speaks of £200 being placed in the hands of the Executive for the assistance of new work at Tranmere (among other places).



In February 1885 an important move forward was made by the formation of a "Christian Band" at Randle Street, commencing with the enrolment of forty members. Autonomous powers in the regulation of the services and general work of the mission were gradually extended to this new body, the Highfield Committee, to which a proportion of members from Randle Street were admitted, retaining the control over the mission building and responsibility for the finances of the work as before. This liberal policy was attended with the happiest results. The people at the Mission were thereby encouraged to keep together and to take an active interest in all its affairs. Collections at the services were commenced and developments in self-government followed in natural order. The Committee all along did its best to encourage and foster the spirit of independence among the people, and at the same time so adjusted the burden of financial responsibility that the infant church was helped through its formative period without destroying its zeal or making it wholly conscious of its weakness.

Under the new *régime* the membership of the Christian Band steadily grew, and, notwithstanding the shifting nature of the population of Tranmere, it soon became apparent that in time important extension would have to be made. Mrs. Grant was one of the first to recognise this. At her death, on December 4, 1888, it was found that she had bequeathed the sum of £200 to the Committee to help forward the work, in which she had from the first taken the keenest interest. The legacy was carefully husbanded, and by 1893 it amounted to £240. In that year the congregation at Randle Street raised a further sum of £60 to add to it, and with the £300 a plot of land, containing some 1166 square yards, fronting on to Old Chester Road, was purchased for the site of a new church building.

In 1895 (June) the Liverpool Congregational Chapel Building Society gave an impulse to the building scheme by the offer of £200 (part of the proceeds of the sale of Brownlow Hill Chapel, Liverpool), provided a like amount was raised and banked by the Highfield Committee before the end of the year. The challenge was accepted. The people at Randle Street raised £105, to which £95 was added by the Highfield Committee, and in January 1896 this was reported to the Society, who paid over the promised moiety. The whole £400 was then deposited in the bank as the nucleus of the building fund.

In October of 1898 Mr. Pedlar accepted a call to the pastorate of Milton Church, Widnes. In recognition of his loving labours at Randle Street for fourteen years and as a token of esteem

a purse of fifty guineas, together with an illuminated address, and a silver-mounted dressing-case to Mrs. Pedlar, were presented to them at the farewell meeting. Looking back over those fourteen years it is plainly recognised that Mr. Pedlar's work in Tranmere, under God's blessing, largely made possible the developments which followed it.

In the following December (during the pastorate of the Rev. E. P. Powell, M.A., of Rock Ferry) the church at Rock Ferry, coinciding with the choice of the Christian Band at Randle Street, invited Mr. James Knox, M.A., a student of the United College at Bradford, to be the assistant minister at Rock Ferry and minister in charge at Randle Street. Mr. Knox accepted the invitation, and entered upon the duties of his dual position in January 1899. His ordination took place at Rock Ferry Church on March 23.

Early in 1900 the matter of the new building was again taken up. A special committee was elected and the work seriously entered upon. The Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel Building Society, recognising the urgency of the case, gave a free grant of £400 towards the scheme. Other friends also came forward, and a start was made in July. The foundation-stone was laid on September 29 by Mr. George Atkin, J.P., of Rock Ferry. At a meeting immediately following the ceremony it was announced by the treasurer, Mr. D. W. Allardice, that the building fund then amounted to over £2000. On April 11, 1901, 96 members of the Christian Band at Randle Street, with the full consent of the Highfield Committee, were formally constituted a church, fully independent and self-supporting. The first act of the newly constituted church was to offer a unanimous and cordial invitation to Mr. Knox to become the pastor, which invitation he at once accepted. Seven deacons were also elected; and it is specially interesting to note that two of these brethren were formerly scholars in the Rose Cottage Sunday School, and had been associated with the Mission all through its history. The new church was opened on May 17, 1901,<sup>1</sup> the Rev. Samuel Pearson, M.A., of Manchester, being the preacher. The inaugural services were continued over four Sundays, at which Principal Simon, Rev. C. A. Mines, Rev. E. P. Powell, and Rev. J. Pedlar preached respectively.

In 1904 the young church found itself faced with the necessity of having to provide a manse, so that the pastor might reside in the midst of his work. A well-built house in Old Chester Road, within a few hundred yards of the church, was at length purchased

<sup>1</sup> It seats 560 and cost £3100.

at a cost of £600. Subscriptions amounting to £75 were received, and a loan of £125 free of interest, from the English Congregational Chapel and Manse Building Society, helped to float the enterprise; the balance of £400 was raised by a mortgage on the property, and this, together with the loan, remains to be paid off.

Taking a look forward, the lack of suitable school buildings is a great drawback to continued progress. In a place like Tranmere, with its teeming population of struggling poor, a Young People's Institute, which could be used on week-nights as well as for Sunday school, is greatly needed. There is ample land adjoining the church for such a building, but as it is only with a struggle that the young church can pay its expenses, there is no prospect of the congregation being able to erect such a building as is needed unless the Congregational Union or private benefactors come forward to meet the difficulty. The church at Tranmere is almost wholly composed of working-class people, and has so far succeeded in paying its way without recourse to the County Union, but the problem of churches, such as this, struggling worthily to do their work among the poor in our large towns, surely well deserves the serious and immediate attention of the central organisations of the denomination.<sup>1</sup>

### Seacombe.

This church is truly a child of the Union. It was in 1889 that the sub-committee appointed to promote open-air services and the building of new churches reported that Seacombe was a place where "something must be done immediately (and at any cost)." There was a great growth of population; every available place of worship was crowded; the nearest Congregational church was Liscard—hence the necessity for immediate action. But unexpected difficulties arose. A challenge made by the Committee to the Liverpool Chapel Building Society, that if they would purchase a suitable site "*we*" would put a chapel or school chapel upon it, was cordially accepted—only no site could be found,<sup>2</sup> nor could friends on the spot find even "a room in which temporary services might be held," though they sought one "carefully and frequently."

By the spring of 1891, however, both difficulties had been

<sup>1</sup> Communicated by Mr. Frederick Wood, Tranmere.

<sup>2</sup> A new park was projected, and land was at a premium.

surmounted. A splendid site was purchased at a cost of £960,<sup>1</sup> with the intention of erecting a temporary iron church or a permanent school chapel; and Sunday services were begun on March 22nd in the reading-room of the Seacombe Institute. In a few months this proved too small, even with the addition of the adjoining library, and on the 25th October the congregation transferred itself to the Vienna Hall. In the previous July (5th) a church was constituted, consisting of thirty-nine members, of whom several had belonged to the Liscard Church.<sup>2</sup> The Rev. J. H. Gwyther, B.A., presided, and consented to act as honorary pastor, thus testifying, as he had done all along, his unqualified sympathy with the new movement. Moreover, simultaneously with the removal to the Vienna Hall a Sunday school was formed, which soon numbered 100 scholars. Valuable service, too, was rendered in these early days by the Rev. J. Mahood, who had retired from Burlington Street and resided at Seacombe.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the building scheme was not forgotten. Plans for a school chapel, to cost £2000, were drawn out. Towards this amount the Liverpool Chapel Building Society made a grant of £300, the Lancashire and Cheshire Society granted the like sum, as well as a loan of £300, to be repaid without interest in ten years, and the English Congregational Chapel Building Society also made a free loan of £100. In the negotiations which led to so good a start the Union's delegates—Dr. Mackennal, Mr. T. H. Thompson, and Mr. Joseph Wood—rendered essential assistance. The same three gentlemen, by request of the Executive, issued an appeal (in February 1892) to the Cheshire churches for the new cause, "not without results." Two other members of the Executive, moreover (Rev. H. Ward Price and the secretary, the Rev. Adam Scott), "spent two days<sup>4</sup> in seeing friends in and around Manchester, and secured subscriptions amounting to £140, besides indefinite promises." These facts deserve to be placed on record.

On Tuesday, the 18th October 1892 two memorable events took place—one the laying of the foundation-stone of the school chapel; the other the recognition meeting of its first (and so far only) minister, the Rev. W. Eaton Thomas, of Aberdare, who entered on his duties the previous Sunday. William Crosfield,

<sup>1</sup> So in Report for 1891, but £1000 in that for 1892.

<sup>2</sup> Report for 1892. The average attendance is given as 50 in May, 60 in September, 78 in November, and 80 in December.

<sup>3</sup> See Minute of District Committee, January 5, 1892. At this date the report is 110 scholars and 14 teachers, 46 church members; £89, 18s. 7½d. raised by voluntary offerings. Supplies, so far, gratuitous.

<sup>4</sup> In the spring of 1892.

Esq., J.P., laid the stone, and Mr. Gwyther presided over the meeting.<sup>1</sup> At this time “£2000 of the £3000 needed for the building had been subscribed”; while “the membership of the church stood at 60, and the attendance of the Sunday congregation was limited only by the size of the meeting-room.”<sup>2</sup> The advance since has been almost unbroken, as the following figures may show: Members at the end of 1893, 101; 1896, 170; 1902, 208; 1906, 230. The school has grown in corresponding proportion, and the increase of the congregation became such as ere long to urge the need of a new church. This could only be a cherished hope so long as the burden of debt remained. By dint of repeated efforts the burden had practically vanished in 1900, and the hope, under the added inspiration of the Twentieth Century Fund, became a clear assurance. About the same time the church was able to declare itself<sup>3</sup> sufficiently strong to “walk alone,” much to the gratification of the Union. Some five years later, in July 1905, the foundation-stones were laid—one by Mrs. Blakeley, the mother of two of the deacons; one by E. Shorrock Eccles, Esq., Liverpool; and one by Raffles Bulley, Esq., Liscard. On February 27, 1906, the building was declared open “for the glory of God and the service of man” by W. H. Lever, Esq., M.P., the Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., chairman of the Congregational Union, completing and crowning the function by a characteristic sermon in the evening. The new church has cost about £5000, will seat 650 persons, “and already the size of the congregations that gather Sunday by Sunday justify the decision to ‘rise and build.’” Surely a result whereon all concerned, including the Union, may be congratulated!

*Grants.*—1891, £50 (or £75 if found necessary). 1892, £75 (or £100 if found necessary). 1893, £90 (plus £10 to meet a deficiency in last year's grant). 1894, £75. 1895, £60. 1896, £55. 1897, £50. 1898, £50. 1899, £40. 1900, £20.

#### NESTON,\* PORT SUNLIGHT,\* AND THORNTON HOUGH.\*

Three churches returned in the list of the Wirral District are not connected with the Union. These are Neston, Port Sunlight, and Thornton Hough.

Neston, under the care of Rev. R. W. Johnson, makes no

<sup>1</sup> See District Minute, January 9, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Report for 1893. The first estimate of cost had been exceeded, it will be noted, by £1000. In 1894 the debt is given as £1300, so that the cost was even more than £3000. See District Minute, January 5, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> District Minute, 22nd January 1901.



claim to be a Congregational church,<sup>1</sup> but is doing good work of its own on Independent lines.

Port Sunlight (Christ Church), having for minister the Rev. S. Gamble Walker, is the gift of W. H. Lever, Esq., M.P., and was opened in June 1904. Previously to this time the congregation met in the Park Road schools, where a church, on a Congregational basis, was formed in September 1891.

Mr. Gamble was a Wesleyan minister, labouring at Chester, Manchester, and Birkenhead, before he settled at Port Sunlight in 1900.

Thornton Hough is also indebted for its existence to Mr. Lever. Until the autumn of 1903 Nonconformity was represented by the Wesleyans only. Then, by negotiations with Conference, their chapel came into the possession of Mr. Lever, who, at a meeting held on Tuesday evening, September 27, 1903, "explained that in future the chapel would be known as the Congregational Chapel, and that on and after the following Sunday the services would be conducted according to the methods of Congregationalism." No objection, it is said, was offered by any members of the old congregation. On the contrary, they all continued their attendance, and their leaders took office on the new committee of management. For such a committee, consisting of twelve members elected annually by ballot at the annual meeting of the congregation, was deemed more suitable than a diaconate. After some months of occasional supplies, a call to the pastorate was accepted by the Rev. T. Langford Burrows, of Blackburn Road Church, Bolton, and he began his present ministry on Sunday, March 6, 1904. In May the old chapel was vacated for a new iron church, erected by Mr. Lever. In March 1905, a new school building, known as Lever School, was opened for day and Sunday use. Finally, the congregation have just removed into a beautiful new church—also the gift of Mr. Lever.

In January 1905 a Church Roll was begun, when the names of sixty-eight members were inscribed—since increased to seventy-four. The place is described as pulsing with a vigorous and varied life—Mr. Burrows being the heart of it all. On April 11, 1906, Mrs. Lever, in the name of her husband, conveyed the whole property "to the Congregational Union of England and Wales, for the benefit of the church and congregation;" and one may express the hope that a formal connection of the Church with our County Union will be the next step.

<sup>1</sup> So letter of Mr. Johnson to Mr. Neil, of Hoylake.

## PARKGATE.\*

In the 1st Report (October 1808) this place—situated on the Deeside of the Wirral—is spoken of as having a room “nearly prepared for a congregation.” Also “at the village of Heswall” there appears to be the opening of a good field for “laborious exertions.” In the 2nd Report (November 1809) we find that the room at Parkgate is “a neat chapel” erected by “our Chester friends,” and that it is supplied by Mr. Foster from Cheshunt College—an itinerant, supported<sup>1</sup> by the Union, who preached for a time in this and “the neighbouring villages,” without much encouragement. Then in 1813 (4th Report) it is announced that the Union has come to the resolution to leave “Parkgate and the hundred of Wirral to be provided for by a worthy and zealous friend in Chester,” who intends to “look out for a minister of approved character, evangelical views, and suitable talents.”

In fact, the Wirral, which has since become so rich and strong in Congregational churches, was at this early date a very disappointing sphere. It is called a “desert,” a “dreary spot,” from which the eye gladly turned to “more fruitful fields and more inviting prospects.”

The next trace of Parkgate is in the year 1833 (April 19), when it is reported that Mr. S. Rawson, of Leeds (a visitor to Parkgate), has opened the Assembly Room for divine service and started a Sunday school. Liverpool ministers have supplied the place, and will continue to preach, it is hoped, once a month during the summer.<sup>2</sup> Some time before 1840 Mr. R. Roberts was engaged to take charge as an evangelist, with the happiest results in Parkgate and surrounding villages—Ness and Neston in particular. Two years later Parkgate has become a regular station of the Union, and is rejoicing in the near prospect of a new chapel about to be built on land obtained through the kindness of George Rawson, Esq. Mr. Roberts has had to relinquish Neston for want of a suitable room,<sup>3</sup> but still preaches on Monday evenings at Ness. From the next Report—after a break of seven years—we learn that the pastor is now

<sup>1</sup> In the statement of account dated September 4, 1811, his salary for a year and a half is given as £105. In addition is an item of £13, 10s. for “sundry supplies at Parkgate”—perhaps subsequent to Mr. Foster’s departure.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Mr. Dallison, of Sutton, speaks of supplying it for some time before September—on Sabbath afternoon and Tuesday evening. But he wants a horse to be provided, the distance, “there and back,” being fully fourteen miles!

<sup>3</sup> The services had been held in the Methodist chapel.

Mr. Hudson<sup>1</sup> (settled in June 1848), "a man of earnest piety," under whose ministry the place has revived. Congregations of 50 to 100 in the morning and 100 to 130 in the evening are the rule in summer, dropping to 10 and 40 in the winter. But the difficulties are great, and "generally depressed" is the next word about the place (1850). The "new lights" and the "American adventists" "have appeared of late in the neighbourhood," causing considerable excitement and some defections. Mr. Hudson resigned in January 1850, and "supplies" did the preaching till "the latter end of 1850," when the Rev. Wm. Daniell, late of Berriew, took the oversight. Things improved, but the hindrances are such "as the population of our towns know little of. Church wealth and church zeal are very influential in many a rural district, and their influence is not unfelt at Parkgate. The children are bribed from their school, and their parents urged to discontinue their attendance at the chapel. Popery, moreover, is of considerable strength and has great influence in the neighbourhood." This prepares us for the sequel. Though there were some signs of encouragement at both Parkgate and Ness which could be reported in 1852, the place went on gradually "decaying," and when a vigorous Presbyterian movement began close by it became clear to the Union (1857) that there was less hope than ever of establishing "a self-sustaining cause." The crisis was reached in 1858. A sub-committee of the Union reported "that it would be best to recommend a sale of the chapel to the Presbyterians, who are influential and increasing in the locality, and are resolved to build if they cannot purchase a place of worship." Into their hands, therefore, by open and honourable process, the chapel presently passed—with natural regret on the part of the Union, which had expended nearly £1200 upon it, but with the prospective consolation that the trustees and male members of the defunct church, who inherited the purchase-money, would refund at least "a portion." The money amounted to £500, and three years later (1861) the annual meeting of the Union was gratified to hear that the trustees had appropriated the whole of the sum towards the erection of a chapel at Lymm!

#### SUTTON.\*

Mr. J. G. Hope can remember "hearing of some of the Queen Street members walking out to Sutton from Chester to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Roberts had removed to Stalybridge.

hold a Sunday school and, he believes, to do lay preaching." This "must have been before the railway was made in 1839." No doubt it is the same fact to which reference is made in the Report of 1834. Here the Rev. Mr. Dallison writes to the Union that the Sunday school at Sutton "is generally attended by three or four teachers from Chester on the Sabbath day" and "is in a promising state"; but the chief matter of his rejoicing is the new chapel<sup>1</sup>—opened in August 1833, and attended by a "rapidly increasing" congregation.

Six years pass and then we are told of the formation of a church, together with the ordination of the Rev. William Clarke in December 1839. The exact date of this double event is stated in the *Evangelical Magazine* as Tuesday, December 17, the services occupying the whole day. In the morning the Rev. S. Luke, of Queen Street, administered the Lord's Supper to "the newly recognised members," after an introductory discourse by the Rev. Richard Fletcher; in the afternoon the ordination took place, the charge being given by Rev. James Turner; and in the evening Rev. S. Bowen, of Townley Street, Macclesfield, delivered a charge to the people. The occasion called forth warm expressions of thankfulness and hope. Twenty-five years ago the village, it is said, was "destitute"; now it is well supplied with the means of grace by Mr. Clarke and his church. Other places in the neighbourhood—Willaston,<sup>2</sup> Pool Town, Ellesmere Port—are cared for; and "his attention has likewise been drawn to the numerous workmen upon the railway in course of construction between Liverpool and Chester, among whom he has preached and distributed tracts." Two years later (1842) the brightest spot seems to be Ellesmere Port, where the small school-room, hired, furnished, lighted and warmed by the people themselves, is crowded to excess at the services.

We come to 1849, and Mr. Samuel Knill, jun., son of Mr. Knill, of Chester, has succeeded Mr. Clarke, but only for eight months, "in the course of last year." During this time "his zealous and very acceptable services had revolutionised the whole district, imparting a life and energy to the cause to which it had long been a stranger. But his health failed in December. He had to retire. The place became dependent on "supplies" without pastoral care; and, though "so long as the people entertained the smallest hope of Mr. Knill's recovery and return to them, they continued to muster in goodly numbers," after his

<sup>1</sup> Built principally through the exertions of the congregation at Queen Street (*Evangelical Magazine* for 1840, p. 187).

<sup>2</sup> The old Hall.

decease they thinned away. Then the Presbyterians seem to have come on the scene, and, as at Parkgate, quickly taken the lead. In 1850 the congregations averaged about 50 in the morning and 120 in the evening, the school had about 120 scholars, and the people had been able to raise £55 among them "towards the support of the interest." But this is our last glimpse of them. The church vanishes from the Report, and gradually ceased to be. Mr. J. G. Hope writes: "I never heard of any successor to Mr. Knill, and we have not had any cause there for many years. The Presbyterians are now the principal workers." With the quenching of "our" light at Sutton, it naturally went out at Ellesmere Port, Pool Town, and Willaston. But the first-named place, at any rate, has not suffered. "At Ellesmere Port the Primitive Methodists have long carried on work. They comprise the bulk of the inhabitants, and are doing a splendid service for Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

*Grants.*—PARKGATE AND SUTTON:—In 1833 Mr. Dallison, the itinerant for both places, probably received all his salary from the Union. Mr. Clarke (for Sutton) and Mr. Roberts (for Parkgate) at least received the greater portion.

For the year ending September 1841 Parkgate contributed £14, 3s. 4d. and Sutton £14, 6s. 8d. to the Union funds, receiving the ministers' salaries in return.

In 1846-47 nothing is contributed, but Parkgate receives £50 and Sutton £23. In 1847-48 the grant to Parkgate is £25; Sutton, £10. In 1848-49 the grant to Parkgate is £40; Sutton, £15—but nothing contributed. In 1849-50 Parkgate contributes £2, 5s. 6d. and receives £30; Sutton contributes nothing and receives £15. In 1850-51 Parkgate contributes £1, 6s. 10d. and receives £30. In 1851-52 Parkgate contributes £1, 15s. and receives £30. In 1854-55 Parkgate receives £30. In 1855-56 Parkgate receives £30. In 1856-57 Parkgate receives £30. In 1857-58 Parkgate receives £7, 10s. (for one quarter only).

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. G. Hope.





## APPENDIX I

It seems worth while to draw out a list of the places in Cheshire where Nonconformists were silenced or ejected in 1660 or 1662. My authorities are Calamy ("Account," vol. ii. pp. 119-136, with "Continuation," vol. i. pp. 165-174), and Samuel Palmer's edition of Calamy (3 vols., 1802), and Urwick's "Nonconformity in Cheshire." For convenience the places are arranged alphabetically. Only the name of the minister silenced or ejected and the date are added to the place.

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
| 1. Acton (the Parish Church of Nantwich) . . . . . | Edward Burg(h)al . . . . .                   | 1662 |
| 2. Ashton-upon-Mersey . . . . .                    | Mr. Ford . . . . .                           | 1662 |
| 3. Astbury . . . . .                               | George Moxon . . . . .                       | 1660 |
| 4. Backford . . . . .                              | John Wilson . . . . .                        | 1662 |
| 5. Barthomley . . . . .                            | Mr. Smith . . . . .                          | 1660 |
| 6. Bidston . . . . .                               | Mr. Wright <sup>1</sup> . . . . .            | 1662 |
| 7. Budworth . . . . .                              | Mr. Livesley . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 8. Bosley Chapel . . . . .                         | John Garside . . . . .                       | 1660 |
| 9. Burton . . . . .                                | Hugh Bethel . . . . .                        | 1662 |
| 10. Chester—St. Michael's . . . . .                | William Cooke . . . . .                      | 1662 |
| 11. Chester—The Great Church (Cathedral) . . . . . | Thomas Harrison . . . . .                    | 1662 |
| 12. Chester—St. Peter's . . . . .                  | John Glendall . . . . .                      | 1662 |
| 13. Chester—St. John's . . . . .                   | Peter Leigh . . . . .                        | 1662 |
| 14. Chester—Trinity . . . . .                      | Thomas Upton . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 15. Chelford . . . . .                             | Hugh Henshaw . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 16. Chrislton . . . . .                            | { (a) Samuel Fisher . . . . .                | 1660 |
|  | { (b) Richard Edwards <sup>1</sup> . . . . . | 1662 |
| 17. Church Minshull . . . . .                      | Samuel Higginson . . . . .                   | 1660 |
| 18. Church Holm (or Holms Chapel) . . . . .        | John Ravenshaw . . . . .                     | 1662 |
| 19. Congleton . . . . .                            | Thomas Brook . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 20. Daresbury . . . . .                            | Robert Eaton . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 21. Doddleston . . . . .                           | Mr. Baker . . . . .                          | 1662 |
| 22. Duckinfield . . . . .                          | Samuel Eaton . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 23. Gawsforth . . . . .                            | Thomas Edge . . . . .                        | 1662 |
| 24. Goostrey . . . . .                             | John Buckley . . . . .                       | 1662 |
| 25. Hargrave . . . . .                             | Samuel Slater . . . . .                      | 1662 |
| 26. Harthil . . . . .                              | Mr. Burroughs <sup>1</sup> . . . . .         | 1662 |
| 27. Haslington . . . . .                           | Mr. Hassel <sup>1</sup> . . . . .            | 1662 |
| 28. Malpas . . . . .                               | George Mainwaring . . . . .                  | 1660 |

<sup>1</sup> Who afterwards conformed.

|                                       |  |                     |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 29. Marbury <sup>1</sup> . . . . .    | Mr. Bruce . . . . .                      | 1662                |
| 30. Mellor . . . . .                  | John Jones . . . . .                     | 1660                |
| 31. Mobberley . . . . .               | Robert Barlow . . . . .                  | 1660                |
| 32. Mottram . . . . .                 | Francis Shelmerdine . . . . .            | } During<br>1660-62 |
| 33. Neston (Great) . . . . .          | Samuel Marsden . . . . .                 |                     |
| 34. Norbury . . . . .                 | John Jollie . . . . .                    | (?) 1662            |
| 35. Northenden <sup>2</sup> . . . . . | Mr. Dunstan . . . . .                    | 1662                |
| 36. Peover, Over . . . . .            | Robert Norbury . . . . .                 | 1662                |
| 37. Pulford . . . . .                 | Randal Guest . . . . .                   | 1662                |
| 38. Rostherne . . . . .               | Adam Martindale . . . . .                | 1662                |
| 39. Sandbach . . . . .                | Joseph Cope . . . . .                    | 1662                |
| 40. Shocklach . . . . .               | John Griffith . . . . .                  | 1662                |
| 41. Shotwick . . . . .                | Matthew Jenkins <sup>3</sup> . . . . .   | 1662                |
| 42. Tarvin . . . . .                  | Sabbath Clark . . . . .                  | 1662                |
| 43. Thornton-in-the-Moors . . . . .   | (a) Samuel Fisher . . . . .              | 1662                |
|                                       | (b) Samuel Edgley <sup>4</sup> . . . . . | 1662                |
| 44. Tilston . . . . .                 | Mr. Bonniman . . . . .                   | 1662                |
| 45. Thurstaston . . . . .             | Mr. Watts . . . . .                      | 1662                |
| 46. Wallasey . . . . .                | John Harvey . . . . .                    | } During<br>1600-02 |
| 47. Waverton . . . . .                | Mr. Marigold . . . . .                   |                     |
| 48. West Kirby . . . . .              | John Cartwright . . . . .                | 1662                |
| 49. Whitley (Nether) . . . . .        | John Machin . . . . .                    | 1662                |
| 50. Wilmslow . . . . .                | John Brereton . . . . .                  | 1660                |
| 51. Wood Church . . . . .             | Samuel Grastie . . . . .                 | 1662                |

## THE FOLLOWING ARE ADDED BY URWICK (see REFERENCES)

|                                       |  |          |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|
| 52. Alderley . . . . .                | Nicholas Stephenson <sup>5</sup> . . . . . | (?) 1660 |
| 53. Barrow (about a mile from Tarvin) | John Boyer <sup>6</sup> . . . . .          | 1660     |
| 54. Church Lawton . . . . .           | Randall Sillitoe <sup>7</sup> . . . . .    | (?) 1662 |
| 55. Disley . . . . .                  | Mr. Creswell <sup>8</sup> . . . . .        | (?) 1660 |
| 56. Eccleston . . . . .               | Joshua Gelborne <sup>9</sup> . . . . .     | 1660     |
| 57. Frodsham . . . . .                | James Cockayne <sup>10</sup> . . . . .     | 1660     |
| 58. Grappenhall . . . . .             | Thomas Bradshaw <sup>11</sup> . . . . .    | 1660     |
| 59. Knutsford . . . . .               | Robert Hunter <sup>12</sup> . . . . .      |          |
| 60. Middlewich . . . . .              | Richard Bowker <sup>13</sup> . . . . .     |          |
| 61. Peover (Nether) . . . . .         | John Garside <sup>14</sup> . . . . .       | 1662     |

<sup>1</sup> "Continuation," vol. i. p. 76.<sup>2</sup> "Continuation," vol. i. p. 174.<sup>3</sup> Who afterwards conformed.<sup>4</sup> "Probably assistant to Mr. Fisher" (Urwick, p. 64). He afterwards conformed.<sup>5</sup> This is a doubtful case. Samuel Shipton, the former incumbent, was "restored"; but Mr. Stephenson "speedily conformed," and became minister of St. Mary's, Chester (p. 379).<sup>6</sup> p. 53.<sup>7</sup> This was not an actual ejection. Mr. Sillitoe died in the same week as the Act of Uniformity came into force; but he would probably have refused to conform (p. 162).<sup>8</sup> Not a certain case—but inferred from the fact that Mr. Creswell's "handwriting" in the Bisley registers ceases at the Restoration (p. 340).<sup>9</sup> p. 52.<sup>10</sup> "A Baptist minister" (p. 451).<sup>11</sup> He "trimmed" and "got another benefice at" Lymm (pp. 453, 455).<sup>12</sup> "At first refused to subscribe," but "afterwards conformed and remained in office" (at Knutsford) "till 1667" (p. 442).<sup>13</sup> "Went away" some time after 1657, *presumably* on account of Nonconformity (p. 167).<sup>14</sup> p. 463. A doubtful case. See No. 8.

|                          |                                     |      |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| 62. Ringway . . . . .    | John Brereton <sup>1</sup>          |      |
| 63. Swettenham . . . . . | Samuel Langley <sup>2</sup> . . . . | 1660 |
| 64. Tarporley . . . . .  | Nathanael Lancaster <sup>3</sup>    |      |
| 65. Woodhey . . . . .    | John Cartwright <sup>4</sup>        |      |

All these are marked in Urwick's map as "places from which ministers were ejected"; but as two of them (Nos. 62, 65) are obvious mistakes, and eight (Nos. 52, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64) are more or less doubtful, the certain ones are reduced to four (Nos. 53, 56, 57, 63). This, taken strictly, would bring down the total number to fifty-five; and it can hardly, in any case, have exceeded sixty.

<sup>1</sup> Silenced at Wilmslow in 1660—appears as minister at Ringway "anno 1662"; and the place is said to have "remained in the possession of the Dissenters for about sixty years longer." Accordingly, there can have been no ejection (p. 383).

<sup>2</sup> p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> He "died 9th January 1660," but the "probability is that had he lived" he would have been a Nonconformist (p. 55).

<sup>4</sup> After his removal from West Kirby, came to Woodhey Chapel as Chaplain to Lady Wilbraham; but there was no ejection (pp. 82, 122, 140).

<sup>5</sup> Inclusive of Duckinfield, which Calamy ascribes to Lancashire ("Account," vol. ii. p. 412).

## APPENDIX II

### CHESHIRE LICENCES GRANTED UNDER THE KING'S DECLARATION OF INDULGENCE, ISSUED MARCH 15, 1672, AND RECALLED ON MARCH 7, 1673.

THE Rev. G. Lyon Turner, M.A., has copied out all the "entries" in the Licence Book (S. P. Dom., Car. ii., E.B., 38A) preserved at the Record Office, including those of Cheshire, of which the following (by his kind permission) is a summary.

There were three forms of licence—one for the place of meeting, one to be "Teacher of a certain congregation," one to be a "Teacher in general or at large."

#### I. Wirral—

- (1) Congregational: Bidston—Robert Widson's House.
- (2) Presbyterian: (a) Wallasey—Ed. Litherland's House, September 5.
  - (b) Upton—Henry Pemberton's House, September 5.
  - (c) Neston—Andrew Lowe's house, September 5.
  - (d) Over, *i.e.* Over Church, in Upton—John Bagot's house, September 5.

#### II. Chester—

- (1) Congregational: (a) John Wilson, to be a Congregational Teacher in the house of Catharine Booth in Northgate Street and Dame Hames, May 1, 1672. Also Catharine Booth's House, May 1, 1672 (but licence not granted to Dame Hames's house).
  - (b) William Cooke, to be a Congregational Teacher in the house of Anthony Henthorne, May 16; also to Anthony Henthorne's house, same date.
  - (c) Henry Williams's house, for Independent meeting-house, Sept. 5.
  - (d) Thomas Harrison, of the city of Chester, licence to be an Independent Teacher.
- (2) Presbyterian: (a) William Cooke, to be a Presbyterian Teacher in the house called the White Fryers in Chester, May 8. Applied for by Mr. Parsons and by Richard Steele, to be sent to him at Westmoreland House in Bartholomew Close, London; received by him May 10 (also for the house, same date, applied for by Mr. Parsons and also by Richard Steele).
  - (b) William Glendall, of the city of Chester, to be a Presbyterian Teacher.



(c) John Wilson, to be a Presbyterian Teacher, at the house of Catharine Booth, July 22 (also, same date, for the house).

(d) William Jones, to be a Presbyterian Teacher, at the house of Mrs. Booth. (Mrs. Booth's house of the city of Chester, Dec. 23.)

(e) John Glendole, for himself as Presbyterian Teacher and for his house (June 10).

(f) Hugh Harvey's house, in Chester, June 10.

(g) Ralph Hall, Grange Lane, to be himself a Presbyterian Teacher in his own house.

(h) Robert Warberton's house, Grange Lane, July 22.

### III. Mouldsworth—

Presbyterian: (a) Application by Thomas Taylor for licence of Oliver Mayor (or Mason ?) to be a Presbyterian Teacher in William Pasheller's house in Mouldsworth, May 21, 1672. Licence issued June 10.

(b) For William Pasheller's house and barne. Licence issued June 12.

### IV. Tarporley Parish—

Congregational: Utkinton Hall. Licence to James Cockayne to be a Congregational Teacher at a house called Utkinton in Tarporley Parish.

### V. Knutsford—

Presbyterian: (a) Hugh Henshaw, Presbyterian Teacher; also his house.

(b) Peter Leigh, December 9, Presbyterian Teacher at his own house.

### VI. Rostherne—

Presbyterian: Adam Martindale, to be a Presbyterian Teacher at the house of Humphrey Peacocke, at Rostherne, July 25 (also the house, same date).

### VII. Bowdon—

Presbyterian: John Brereton, M.A., to be a Presbyterian Teacher at his own house, Castle Hill, in the Parish of Bowdon, May 22 (also, same date, the house described as east of Rostherne, on the Bollen, S.E. of Baxter).

### VIII. Northenden—

Presbyterian: Francis Shelmerdine, to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his house at Northenden (also, the house).

### IX. Great Budworth—

John Whistralls' house.

### X. Peover Superior—

Philip Wright's house.

### XI. Weaverham—

Presbyterian: Ralph Hall, to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his house, July 22 (also the house, same date).

### XII. Stockport—

(1) Baptist: Samuel Bowden to be a Baptist Teacher at the house of William Browne, of Stockport in Kent (?), July 25 (also the house, same date).

- (2) Congregational: Widow Broome's house.
- (3) Presbyterian: (a) James Lawton, to be a Presbyterian Teacher at the house of John Sidebotham, August 10 (also the house, same date).  
(b) James Sutton, to be a Presbyterian Teacher at his own house, Oct. 28.
- XIII. Mottram (in Longdendale)—  
Presbyterian: (a) John Garside, to be a Presbyterian Teacher at Mottram.  
(b) John Mottram's house, July 25.  
(c) Robert Booth's house.
- XIV. Wilmslow—  
(1) Presbyterian: house of William Alcock, to be a Presbyterian meeting-place in Fulshaw in Wilmslow, July 22.  
(2) Independent: (a) Robert Burch, to be an Independent Teacher at Wilmslow, Sept. 30.  
(b) House of William Linney, of Wilmslow in Cheshire, Independent.
- XV. Prestbury—  
Presbyterian: (a) A new built meeting-house in Winkle in Prestbury, Cheshire, Presbyterian.  
(b) Elizabeth Skrimshire's house.
- XVI. Sandbach—  
Presbyterian: (a) Thomas Leadbeater, to be a Presbyterian Teacher at his house called the Hermitage, Sandbach Parish (also his own house, April 16).  
(b) Robert Turner's house.  
(c) John Stonier's house, September 5.
- XVII. Macclesfield—  
Presbyterian: (a) John Garside, of Marksfield in Cheshire, to be a Presbyterian Teacher.  
(b) Edward Stone's house, July 25.  
(c) John Whiteaker's house, October 28.
- XVIII. Rainow—  
Presbyterian: (a) House of Thomas Clarke, Presbyterian.  
(b) Second to Thomas Clarke, nearly five months later, November 18.
- XIX. Astbury—  
(1) Presbyterian: Mr. Andrew Barnett to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his house, May 13 (also his house, in Asbury Parish, the same date).  
(2) Congregational: (a) Mr. George Moxon to be a Congregational Teacher in his dwelling-house in the parish of Asbury, April 30 (also his house the same date).  
(c) John Burgess's house of Asbury.
- XX. Monks Coppenhall—  
Congregational: James White to be a Congregational Teacher in the house of George Hamnett at Monks Copnall in Copnall, July 25 (also the house, same date).

## XXI. Nantwich—

- Presbyterian : (a) Robert Fogg to be a Presbyterian Teacher in the house of John King.  
 (b) John King's house.  
 (c) Robert Fogg's house, August 10.  
 (d) John Malden's house.

## XXII. Bartomley—

- Presbyterian : (a) Richard Steele to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his own house, September 30 (also his own house).  
 (b) Application for licence of Robert Steele's house of Bartomley was made on May 21 and issued June 10.  
 (c) House of Ralph Alsager, of Bartomley, September 5.  
 (d) House of Hugh Kent, September 5.

## XXIII. Wybunbury—

- Presbyterian : John Ravenshaw to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his house (also the house, in Wibunbury Parish ; licences for both issued April 30).

## XXIV. Wrenbury—

- Congregational : the house of Thomas Hamner, July 25.

## XXV. Malpas—

- Presbyterian : Thomas Burroughs, to be a Presbyterian Teacher in his house at Malpas, July 25 (also the house, same date).

## XXVI. Goostrey (Goostre, Gostre, Gostry, &amp;c.)—

- Presbyterian : Joseph Coape to be a Presbyterian Teacher at the house of Christopher Holford.

## XXVII. Norbury, in Stockport Parish—

- Presbyterian : John Jolly to be a Presbyterian Teacher at the house of Mr. Hyde in the Town of Norbury, December 9.

## XXVIII. Gawsworth—

- Presbyterian : (a) John Garson to be a Teacher at the house of Edward Skelerne.  
 (b) Edward Skelerne's house in Gawsworth.

XXIX. Lower Withington (East of Goostrey near Chelford)—  
Edward Deane's house, July 25.

*N.B.*—*Cf.* the published volumes of the State Papers (Domestic) for the years 1671-73. A summary estimate of all the licences issued is given in the Preface (pp. 36-46) of the volume for October 1672-February 1673.

## APPENDIX III

### NAMES OF THE PLACES WHERE THE MEETINGS OF THE CHESHIRE UNION HAVE BEEN HELD

|                      |                |                         |            |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Macclesfield . . .   | Nov. 5, 1806   | Congleton . . . .       | Sept. 1823 |
| Nantwich . . . .     | Feb. 3, 1807   | Tattenhall . . . .      | April 1824 |
| Northwich . . . .    | Sept. 17, 1807 | Knutsford . . . .       | Sept. 1824 |
| — . . . .            | April 1808     | Middlewich . . . .      | April 1825 |
| Congleton . . . .    | Sept. 14, 1808 | Over . . . . .          | Sept. 1825 |
| — . . . .            | April 1809     | Nantwich . . . .        | April 1826 |
| Stockport . . . .    | Sept. 1809     | Northwich . . . .       | Sept. 1826 |
| Chester . . . . .    | April 1810     | Chester . . . . .       | April 1827 |
| — . . . .            | Sept. 1810     | Sandbach . . . .        | Sept. 1827 |
| — . . . .            | April 1811     | Tintwistle . . . .      | April 1828 |
| Stockport . . . .    | Sept. 4, 1811  | Macclesfield (Town-     |            |
| Northwich . . . .    | April 1812     | ley St.) . . . . .      | Sept. 1828 |
| Middlewich . . . .   | Sept. 9 & 10,  | Stockport (Orchard St.) | April 1829 |
|                      | 1812           | Tattenhall . . . .      | Oct. 1829  |
| Northwich . . . .    | April 6 & 7,   | Middlewich . . . .      | April 1830 |
|                      | 1813           | Knutsford . . . .       | Sept. 1830 |
| Chester . . . . .    | Sept. 7 & 8,   | Over . . . . .          | April 1831 |
|                      | 1813           | Northwich . . . .       | Sept. 1831 |
| Duckinfield . . . .  | April 1814     | Congleton . . . .       | April 1832 |
| Chester . . . . .    | Sept. 1814     | Nantwich . . . .        | Sept. 1832 |
| Tintwistle . . . .   | April 1815     | Duckinfield . . . .     | April 1833 |
| Nantwich . . . . .   | Sept. 1815     | Macclesfield (Roe St.)  | Sept. 1833 |
| Macclesfield . . . . | April 1816     | Stockport (Hanover      |            |
| Middlewich . . . .   | Sept. 1816     | Chapel) . . . . .       | April 1834 |
| Stockport (Orchard   |                | Chester . . . . .       | Sept. 1834 |
| St.) . . . . .       | April 1817     | Tintwistle . . . .      | April 1835 |
| Sandbach . . . . .   | Sept. 1817     | Tattenhall . . . .      | Sept. 1835 |
| Congleton . . . . .  | April 1818     | Sandbach . . . . .      | April 1836 |
| Tintwistle . . . .   | Sept. 1818     | Congleton . . . .       | Sept. 1836 |
| Northwich . . . .    | April 1819     | Macclesfield (Town-     |            |
| Gatley . . . . .     | Sept. 1819     | ley St.) . . . . .      | April 1837 |
| Over . . . . .       | April 1820     | Middlewich . . . .      | Sept. 1837 |
| Chester . . . . .    | Sept. 1820     | Knutsford . . . .       | April 1838 |
| Stockport (Taber-    |                | Over . . . . .          | Sept. 1838 |
| nacle) . . . . .     | April 1821     | Northwich . . . .       | April 1839 |
| Sandbach . . . . .   | Sept. 1821     | Tintwistle . . . .      | Sept. 1839 |
| Northwich . . . .    | April 1822     | Woodside (Hamilton      |            |
| Macclesfield . . . . | Sept. 1822     | Square) . . . . .       | April 1840 |
| Stockport (Orchard   |                | Hazel Grove . . . .     | Sept. 1840 |
| St.) . . . . .       | April 1823     | Altrincham . . . .      | April 1841 |

|                         |            |   |            |
|-------------------------|------------|---|------------|
| Macclesfield (Roe St.)  | Sept. 1841 | Over . . . . .                            | April 1845 |
| Stockport (Orchard St.) | April 1842 | Middlewich . . . . .                      | Sept. 1845 |
| Sandbach . . . . .      | Oct. 1842  | Macclesfield (Town-<br>ley St.) . . . . . | April 1846 |
| Tattenhall . . . . .    | April 1843 | Runcorn (Bethesda)                        | Sept. 1846 |
| Nantwich . . . . .      | Oct. 1843  | Tintwistle . . . . .                      | April 1847 |
| Northwich . . . . .     | April 1844 | Stockport (Orchard<br>St.) . . . . .      | Sept. 1847 |
| Chester . . . . .       | Oct. 1844  |   |            |

*Resolved:* That the meetings in future be held only *once* in the year, and in the month of April.

The first annual meeting was held at Crewe, April 1848.

*Resolved:* That the name of the Association be changed from the "Christian Union" into the "Cheshire Congregational Home Missionary Society."

|                        |            |                      |            |
|------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| Sandbach . . . . .     | April 1849 | Chester . . . . .    | April 1853 |
| Bowdon Downs . . . . . | April 1850 | Crewe . . . . .      | April 1854 |
| Over . . . . .         | April 1851 | " . . . . .          | April 1855 |
| Wilmslow . . . . .     | April 1852 | Tintwistle . . . . . | April 1856 |

At the Jubilee meeting held at Tintwistle it was resolved that the former name of the society, "The Cheshire Union," be restored.

|   |                        |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Sale . . . . .                                | April 1857             | Lymm . . . . .  | April 22 & 23,<br>1879 |
| Macclesfield (Town-<br>ley St.) . . . . .     | April 1858             | Rock Ferry . . . . .                                    | Mar. 23 & 24,<br>1880  |
| Chester (Queen St.)                           | April 1859             | Stockport (Welling-<br>ton Rd.) . . . . .               | Mar. 30, 1881          |
| Stockport (Hanover<br>Chapel) . . . . .       | April 1860             | Hyde (Union St.) . . . . .                              | Mar. 23, 1882          |
| Bowdon . . . . .                              | April 1861             | Bowdon . . . . .  | April 4, 1883          |
| Hyde (Zion Chapel)                            | April 24, 1862         | Crewe . . . . .   | April 2, 1884          |
| Birkenhead (Oxton<br>Rd. Chapel) . . . . .    | April 22, 1863         | Congleton . . . . .                                     | April 15, 1885         |
| Macclesfield (Roe St.<br>Chapel) . . . . .    | April 20, 1864         | Middlewich . . . . .                                    | April 7, 1886          |
| Sale . . . . .                                | April 26, 1865         | Cheadle . . . . .                                       | Mar. 23, 1887          |
| Chester (Queen St.<br>Chapel) . . . . .       | April 19, 1866         | Chester . . . . .                                       | April 11, 1888         |
| Knutsford . . . . .                           | April 17, 1867         | Wilmslow . . . . .                                      | Mar. 27, 1889          |
| Stockport (Hanover<br>Chapel) . . . . .       | April 29, 1868         | Sale . . . . .  | April 16, 1890         |
| Wilmslow . . . . .                            | April 21, 1869         | Marple . . . . .  | April 15, 1891         |
| Bowdon . . . . .                              | April 27, 1870         | Liscard . . . . .                                       | April 7, 1892          |
| (Crewe. Autumnal Session, Sept. 28,<br>1870.) |                        | Birkenhead (Oxton<br>Rd. Church) . . . . .              | Mar. 23, 1893          |
| Northwich . . . . .                           | April 26, 1871         | Northwich . . . . .                                     | April 5, 1894          |
| Chester (Queen St.)                           | April 24, 1872         | (Malpas. Autumnal Session, Sept. 27,<br>1894.)          |                        |
| Cheadle . . . . .                             | April 16, 1873         | Macclesfield (Park<br>Green) . . . . .                  | April 4, 1895          |
| Middlewich . . . . .                          | April 22, 1874         | (Nantwich. Autumnal Session, Oct.<br>1895.)             |                        |
| Birkenhead . . . . .                          | April 21, 1875         | Stockport . . . . .                                     | April 15, 1896         |
| Marple . . . . .                              | April 26, 1876         | (Ashton-on-Mersey. Autumnal Session,<br>Oct. 15, 1896.) |                        |
| Sale . . . . .                                | April 24 & 25,<br>1877 | Bowdon . . . . .  | April 6 & 7, 1897      |
| Macclesfield (Park<br>Green) . . . . .        | April 9 & 10,<br>1878  | (Hoylake. Autumnal Session, Oct. 7,<br>1897.)           |                        |
|   |                        | Rock Ferry . . . . .                                    | Mar. 29 & 30, 1898     |
|   |                        | (Bollington. Autumnal Session, Sept.<br>27, 1898.)      |                        |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| Hatherlow . . . April 11 & 12, 1899<br>(Handbridge. Autumnal Session, Sept.<br>28, 1899.)                   | Cheadle . . . April 7 & 8, 1903<br>(Tranmere. Autumnal Session, Oct. 2,<br>1903.)    |
| Crewe . . . April 3 & 4, 1900<br>(Congleton. Autumnal Session, Sept.<br>20, 1900.)                          | Chester . . . April 12 & 13, 1904<br>(Broadheath. Autumnal Session, Oct.<br>1904.)   |
| Hyde (Union St.) Mar. 26 & 27,<br>1901<br>(Alsager. Autumnal Session, Sept. 19,<br>1901.)                   | Wilmslow . . . April 12 & 13, 1905<br>(Tintwistle. Autumnal Session, Oct.<br>1905.)  |
| Macclesfield (Park April 9 & 10,<br>Green) . . . 1902<br>(Hollingworth. Autumnal Session, Oct.<br>2, 1902.) | Stockport . . . April 4 & 5, 1906<br>(Knutsford. Autumnal Session, Oct. 8,<br>1906.) |

## APPENDIX IV

### CHURCHES ONCE AIDED

|                                 |           |                                      |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Alsager . . . . .               | 1877-1897 | Holywell . . . . .                   | 1869-1877 |
| Bowdon, or rather               |           | Hoylake . . . . .                    | 1885-1896 |
| Altrincham . . . . .            | 1838-1842 | (With an interval.)                  |           |
| Buckley . . . . .               | 1874-1877 | Hyde (Union St.) 1821 (?) - 1827 (?) |           |
| Cheadle . . . . .               | 1860-1861 | Middlewich . . . . .                 | 1808-1829 |
| Cheadle Hulme . . . . .         | 1869-1872 | Mold . . . . .                       | 1870-1880 |
| Congleton . . . . .             | 1833      | Mottram . . . . .                    | 1849-1873 |
| (Also a donation of £15 in 1851 |           | Over . . . . .                       | 1808-1838 |
| and 1852, see General Minute-   |           | Nantwich . . . . .                   | 1888      |
| Book.)                          |           | (Three-quarters of a year.)          |           |
| Crewe . . . . .                 | 1848-1870 | Partington . . . . .                 | 1862-1869 |
| Great Boughton . . . . .        | 1869-1876 | Preston . . . . .                    | 1889-1903 |
| Hamilton Square,                |           | (With an interval.)                  |           |
| Birkenhead . . . . .            | 1896-1902 | Rock Ferry . . . . .                 | 1870-1871 |
| Handbridge . . . . .            | 1880-1901 | Seacombe . . . . .                   | 1891-1900 |
| Haslington . . . . .            | 1808-1879 | Tabernacle, Stockport                | 1880-1882 |
| Hazel Grove . . . . .           | 1829-1892 | Union Chapel, Stock-                 |           |
| (With short intervals.)         |           | port . . . . .                       | 1875-1882 |
| Hollingworth . . . . .          | 1838-1888 | Wilmslow . . . . .                   | 1845-1851 |
| (Regularly from 1849.)          |           | Woodley . . . . .                    | 1876-1889 |

## APPENDIX V

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE UNION'S AIDED STATIONS  
WITH THEIR OUT-STATIONS (SO FAR AS SHOWN IN  
THE REPORTS)

*N.B.*—The marks + and - in this list have their usual meaning of plus and minus.

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1807-8.                       | Middlewich . . .              |
| Sandbach . . .                | Minshull.                     |
| Haslington.                   | Over.                         |
| Marchfield.                   | Peover.                       |
| Coppenhall                    | Goostrey.                     |
| Moss.                         |                               |
| 1814.                         |                               |
| Lawton Salt-                  | Tattenhall . . .              |
| works.                        | Barnshill.                    |
| Brookhouse                    | Obbhill.                      |
| Green.                        | Sandy Lane.                   |
| Minshull Hill.                | Buckley.                      |
| Middlewich . . .              | Edge.                         |
| Peover.                       | Middlewich . . .              |
| Parkgate . . .                | Goostrey.                     |
| Heswall.                      | Peover.                       |
| Tattenhall.                   | Minshull.                     |
| 1809.                         | Marchfield.                   |
| The same + Over (with Middle- | Over.                         |
| wich); and Newton.            | Sandbach . . .                |
| 1811.                         | Haslington.                   |
| Parkgate.                     | Henheath.                     |
| Tattenhall . . .              | Barthomley.                   |
| Barton.                       | Brookhouse                    |
| Tilston                       | Green.                        |
| Bickerton.                    |                               |
| Middlewich . . .              | Hyde Lane.                    |
| Peover.                       | Boughton.                     |
| Over.                         | Malpas.                       |
| Minshull.                     | 1816.                         |
| Sandbach. . .                 | Sandbach <sup>1</sup> . . .   |
| Marchfield.                   | Same.                         |
| Haslington.                   | Middlewich <sup>1</sup> . . . |
| 1813.                         | Over.                         |
| Tattenhall . . .              | Minshull.                     |
| "Several new                  | Peover.                       |
| places."                      | Barton.                       |
| Sandbach . . .                | Norbury.                      |
| Haslington.                   | Gates-heath.                  |
| Henheath, near                | Hatten-heath.                 |
| Wybunbury.                    | Hargreave.                    |
| Marchfield.                   | Malpas.                       |
|                               | Hvde Lane.                    |

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Silvester of Sandbach occasionally supplies Goostrey, Marchfield, and Minshall, along with Mr. Job Wilson; Mr. Capps and Mr. W. Hitchen (of Middlewich), &c.

[illegible]

|                                    |                |                                   |                    |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                    | 1847.          |                                   | 1861.              |
| Hazel Grove . .                    | } Grantees.    | The same.                         |                    |
| Parkgate . . .                     |                |                                   | 1862. <sup>1</sup> |
| Malpas . . .                       |                | Cheadle.                          |                    |
| Bucklow Hill .                     |                | Crewe and Haslington.             |                    |
| Wilmslow . .                       |                | Gatley.                           |                    |
|                                    |                | Lymm.                             |                    |
|                                    | 1849.          | Malpas.                           |                    |
| The same, +                        |                | Mottram.                          |                    |
| Sutton, Crewe,                     |                | Partington.                       |                    |
| and Hasling-                       |                |                                   | 1863.              |
| ton.                               |                | The same, but - Cheadle.          |                    |
| Hollingworth .                     | Mottram.       |                                   | 1864.              |
|                                    | Wooley Bridge. | The same as 1863.                 |                    |
|                                    | Padfield.      |                                   | 1865.              |
|                                    | 1850.          | The same, but Hollingworth re-    |                    |
| The same + Newton, but - Padfield. |                | appears with Mottram.             |                    |
|                                    | 1851.          |                                   | 1866.              |
| Hazel Grove.                       |                | The same + Furness Vale, Bolling- |                    |
| Parkgate.                          |                | ton, Witton and Marston, Knolls   |                    |
| Malpas . . .                       | Threapwood.    | Green.                            |                    |
|                                    | Normansheath.  |                                   | 1867.              |
|                                    | Oldcastle.     | Malpas; Barton; Crewe; Hasling-   |                    |
|                                    | Bradley.       | ton and Wheelock; Bollington;     |                    |
| Bucklow Hill.                      |                | Furness Vale; Wood End;           |                    |
| Crewe and Has-                     |                | Mottram and Hollingworth;         |                    |
| lington.                           |                | Gatley; Lymm; Partington;         |                    |
| Mottram and                        |                | Knolls Green; Ashton; Hart        |                    |
| Hollingworth.                      |                | Lane; Northenden.                 |                    |
| Newton.                            |                |                                   | 1868.              |
|                                    | 1852.          | The same, but - Lymm; Mal-        |                    |
| The same.                          |                | pas; Wood End.                    |                    |
|                                    | 1857.          | + Boughton and Chrisel-           |                    |
| The same, but - Newton.            |                | ton.                              |                    |
|                                    | 1858.          |                                   | 1869.              |
| The same as 1857, but - Parkgate.  |                | The same as 1868, but + Norbury;  |                    |
|                                    | 1859.          | Witton, Moulton and Daven-        |                    |
| The same, but + Lymm.              |                | ham; Holywell; and Hazel          |                    |
|                                    | 1860.          | Grove.                            |                    |
| Hazel Grove.                       |                |                                   | 1870.              |
| Malpas.                            |                | The same as 1869 + Malpas and     |                    |
| Mottram.                           |                | Threapwood; Whaley                |                    |
| Newton.                            |                | Bridge; Cheadle                   |                    |
| Crewe and Haslington.              |                | Hulme; Mold.                      |                    |
| Lymm.                              |                | - Crewe; Partington;              |                    |
| Cheadle.                           |                | and Hazel Grove.                  |                    |

<sup>1</sup> For out-stations from this year see Appendix VI.



1871.

The same as 1870, but + Mold; Ape-  
thorn; Rock Ferry.  
- Furness Vale.

1872.

The same as 1871, but + Brereton.  
- Rock Ferry; Ape-  
thorn.

1873.

The same as 1872, but - Brereton  
and Gatley.

1874.

The same as 1873, but - Chrisel-  
ton; Mottram; Cheadle Hulme.

1875.

The same as 1874, but + Buckley.

1876.

The same as 1875, but + Union  
Chapel (Stockport).

1877.

The same as 1876, but + Woodley  
and Crewe Mission.

1878.

The same as 1877, but + Gatley;  
Hazel Grove; and Over Tabley.

1879.

Alsager.  
Haslington and Wheelock.  
Crewe Mission.  
Bollington.  
Woodley.  
Gatley.  
Hollingworth.  
Whaley Bridge.  
Union Chapel (Stockport).  
Hazel Grove.  
Knutsford and Mobberley.  
Ashton-on-Mersey.  
Moulton and Witton.  
Mold.  
Malpas and Threapwood.

1880.

The same + Tattenhall; Hand-  
bridge; Sandbach; and Taber-  
nacle (Stockport); Over Tabley.

1881.

The same - Mold; Haslington.

1882.

The same as 1881.

1883.

The same + Bucklow Hill.  
- Witton; the Taber-  
nacle; Tattenhall;  
Over Tabley.

1884.

The same as 1883.

1885.

The same + Hoylake.

1886.

The same.

1887.

The same.

1888.

The same + Nantwich.  
- Whaley Bridge.

1889.

The same + Prenton.  
- Hoylake.  
- Nantwich.

1890.

The same + Farndon; Alsager,  
Sandbach, and Wheelock,  
grouped together till 1893.

1891.

The same + Tattenhall; and Sea-  
combe.

1892.

The same + Barton, Brinksway.  
- Prenton.

1893.

The same - Gatley; Hazel Grove;  
Bollington.

1894.

The same.

1895.

The same + Hoylake; Bollington.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1896.  | 1901.   |
| The same + Prenton.  | The same + Bollington; Bramhall;<br>Whaley Bridge.<br>- Seacombe; Gatley. |
| 1897.  | 1902.   |
| The same + Hamilton Square;<br>Buxton Rd.; Gatley.<br>- Hoylake. | The same - Handbridge.  |
| 1898.  | 1903.   |
| The same + Frodsham; and Lymm.<br>- Bollington.                  | The same - Hamilton Square.   |
| 1899.  | 1904.   |
| The same.  | The same + Gatley.<br>- Prenton.  |
| 1900.  | 1905.   |
| The same.  | The same.   |
|  | 1906.   |
|  | The same.   |

## APPENDIX VI

### OUT-STATIONS—FROM YEAR OF FIRST INSERTION— IN THE REPORTS (1862)

1862. *Bowdon*: Mobberley Village.  
       Queen Street (Chester): Chriselton, Trevallyn, Upton.  
       Roe Street (Macclesfield): Bollington.  
       Townley Street (Macclesfield): Prestbury.  
       Malpas: Threapwood, Bawbrook, Bank Farm, Cuddington,  
       Stockton Hall, and Crosshill.  
       Sale: Ashton-on-Mersey and Hart Lane.  
       Sandbach: Brereton Green.  
       Tattenhall: Barton Chapel.  
       Tintwistle: Hollingworth School and Padfield School.
1863. The same, except that Malpas has only Threapwood, Bank Farm,  
       Chorlton.
1864. The same, except that Malpas has Threapwood, Crosy-hill,  
       Bawbrook.
1865. The same, except that Malpas has same as 1863.  
       and Tintwistle has only Padfield School.  
       and Bowdon has added Heyhead.
1866. The same as 1865, except that Roe Street has dropped Bol-  
       lington, Malpas has Threapwood only, and Sale has dropped  
       Ashton and Hart Lane.
1867. The same, except that Townley St. has dropped Prestbury, and  
       the Stockport district has taken on "Wood End."
1868. The same, except that Queen St. has dropped Chriselton and  
       Bowdon has added Broadheath and Baguley.
1869. The same.
1870. The same.
1871. The same.
1872. The same, but Chriselton appears as out-station of Boughton.
1873. Queen St.: Trevallyn and Upton.  
       Boughton: Chriselton.  
       Sandbach: Brereton Green.  
       Stockport District: Wood End.  
       Tintwistle: Padfield School.  
       Bowdon: Heyhead, Mobberley Village, Broadheath.  
       Altrincham: Hale Barns.  
       Northwich: Davenham and Witton.
1874. The same.
1875. The same.
1876. The same.
1877. The same.

- 1878. The same + Crewe (Wood St.).
- 1879. The same as 1878.
- 1880. The same, except that Bowdon adds " British School Mission " and Altrincham drops Hale Barns.
- 1881. The same, except that Queen St. drops Trevallyn and Handbridge takes it on.
- 1882. The same, except that Trevallyn disappears.
- 1883. The same as 1882.
- 1884. The same.
- 1885. The same.
- 1886. Queen St. : Upton.  
Great Boughton : Chriselton.  
Rock Ferry : Tranmere.  
Runcorn : St. Luke's.  
Tattenhall : Barton.  
Wilmslow : Morley.  
Cheadle : Long Lane.  
Tintwistle : Padfield School.  
Bowdon : Heyhead, Mobberley Village, Broadheath, British School Mission.  
Bucklow Hill : Tabley.
- 1887. The same, but Queen St. adds Hoole and Tattenhall drops Barton.
- 1888. The same as 1887, but Handbridge again takes on Trevallyn.
- 1889. The same, but Mobberley (Knolls Green) is attached to Knutsford.
- 1890. The same.
- 1891. The same, but Bowdon takes on Partington.
- 1892. The same, but Sale takes on Baguley.
- 1893. Same as 1892.
- 1894. The same, but Queen St. drops Hoole; and Mobberley (Pepper St.) is united with Knolls Green.
- 1895. The same, but Tranmere detached from Rock Ferry.
- 1896. The same as 1895, but Moulton and Witton attached to Northwich.
- 1897. The same, but Boughton has dropped Chriselton.
- 1898. The same.
- 1899. The same.
- 1900. Bowdon : British School Mission, Broadheath, Heyhead, Partington.  
Mobberley : Knolls Green and Pepper St. (in connection with the " Downs " and Ashley Road).  
Bucklow Hill : Tabley.  
Northwich : Moulton.  
Handbridge : Trevallyn, Lavister.  
Queen St. : Upton (but not printed as " out-station ").  
Malpas : Threapwood, Bradeley, Norbury.  
Runcorn : St. Luke's.  
Cheadle : Long Lane.  
Cheadle Hulme : Adswood.  
Hanover (Stockport) : Bridgefield.  
Wellington Road (Stockport) : Cale Green ; Ward St.  
Tintwistle : Padfield School.  
Liscard : Field Road.
- 1901. The same as 1900.

- 1902. The same, but Bowdon drops British School Mission; and Sale takes on Roebuck Lane Mission.
- 1903. The same, but Orchard St. (Stockport) has Portwood Mission.
- 1904. The same as 1903.
- 1905. The same as 1904, but Malpas adds Chorlton Lane (see 1863, &c.), and Rock Ferry returns "Randle St. Mission."
- 1906. The same, but Malpas adds Worthenbury.



## APPENDIX VII

### I

#### RULES OF THE UNION IN 1806 (PRINTED WITH THE FIRST REPORT, 1808)

FOR the information of the Friends of the Union at large, we subjoin the following statement of the Rules of our Association, omitting such as are only local and temporary.

1. That, as a Union of the Christian ministers and congregations in this County appears desirable, we now solemnly and affectionately unite ourselves, in the name and presence of our Lord Jesus, as fellow-subjects of His kingdom, to promote His glory, and the salvation of our fellow-sinners.

2. That the *chief* object of this Union be the spread of the Gospel in the unevangelised parts of the County by means of Itinerant Preaching.

3. That this Union shall not, either directly or indirectly, interfere with the rights or discipline of particular churches; and that no grievance be brought by any church or minister before the Association.

4. That a Committee be appointed to carry into effect the purposes of this Union, consisting of each minister with one or two lay brethren of every congregation.

5. That a fund be raised by annual collections, subscriptions, &c., or in any other way that may best suit the ministers and congregations, to be vested in the hands of two treasurers.

6. That Messrs. T. Jones, of Chester, and J. Brown, of Stockport, be treasurers, and Messrs. White, of Chester, Evans, of Stockport, be secretaries.

7. That any seven of the above number be empowered to act. And when it is thought expedient to call an *extra* meeting of the whole Committee, Northwich is fixed upon as the most central spot for the usual place of meeting.

(*N.B.*—It is respectfully submitted to the Union whether this Rule does not need a revision. The number empowered to act appears far too small in proportion to the number on the Committee.)

8. That the Union shall meet twice in the year, in the months of April and September, and the ministers and delegates shall hold themselves bound to attend at each meeting. There shall be public preaching on the first evening, the next day to be devoted to business, and, if expedient, preaching in the evening. Every meeting for business to begin and end with prayer.

9. That at each meeting the treasurer's accounts be audited on

the first evening. Messrs. John Jackson, of Stockport, John Johnson, of Macclesfield, and William Hitchin, of Middlewich, being appointed auditors.

10. That the General Meeting be held at each place in the Union successively.

11. That it be a standing Rule respecting the choice of an Itinerant that no one be chosen who has not been previously heard and approved of at a General Meeting.

12. That the expenses incurred by either of the secretaries or any minister in the County, when either of them may in writing request to visit the Itinerancy, be defrayed out of the fund.

13. That no expense exceeding £5 be incurred in fitting up any new place of worship without first obtaining leave of the Committee of the Union.

## II

### RULES AS REVISED IN 1825

Laws and Regulations of the "Cheshire Union," as revised and agreed upon at the Half-Yearly Meeting, held at Over, September 29, 1825.

1. That as a Union of the Christian ministers and congregations of the denomination of Independents in the County of Chester appears to be highly desirable, we solemnly and affectionately unite ourselves, in the name and presence of our Lord Jesus and as subjects of His kingdom, to promote His glory and the salvation of our fellow-sinners.

2. That the chief object of this Union be the spread of the Gospel, in the unevangelised parts of the County, by means of Itinerant Preaching.

3. That this Union shall not, either directly or indirectly, interfere with the rights or discipline of individual churches; and that no grievance be brought by any church or minister before the Association.

4. That the affairs of the Union shall be managed by a Committee which shall consist of the following persons, viz., the ministers of the congregations connected with the Union; two delegates appointed by each church; subscribers to the fund of the Union to the amount of one guinea, or more, annually; and collectors of penny subscriptions to the amount of £2 or more per annum; and that any *nine* of such duly constituted members met at a half-yearly meeting, or at an extraordinary meeting, summoned by notice from the secretary to all the churches, be empowered to act.

5. That a fund to support the object of the Union be raised by annual collections, subscriptions, penny a week societies, or in any other way that may best suit the several churches and congregations; that this fund be vested in the hands of one or more treasurer or treasurers as may from time to time be deemed expedient.

6. That the Union shall meet twice in the year, in the months of April and September, at each of the places connected with the Union successively, unless some different arrangement shall be adopted as preferable at the previous half-yearly meeting. The ministers and delegates shall hold themselves bound to attend each meeting. There shall be public preaching on the first evening by a minister appointed by the people where the meeting is held. The number and order of the meetings on the second day shall be arranged by the

secretary and the minister of the place, so as to afford ample time for the assembled Committee to transact the business of the Union. There shall be a sermon preached on the second evening, by a minister appointed by the Committee, at the previous half-yearly meeting. Each meeting of the Union shall close with the administration of the Lord's Supper, if convenient, to the church where the meeting is held.

7. That at the meetings in which the special business of the Union is transacted no persons be considered as entitled to be present but those that belong to the Committee according to the Rule 4; and if any others be present by courtesy, it shall be a standing rule that they withdraw at the suggestion of any member of the Committee. Every such meeting for business shall begin and end with prayer. The course of business at such meetings shall proceed as follows: (1) The treasurer shall report the state of the funds; (2) the resolutions passed at the last previous meetings shall be read; (3) the secretary shall make his report of the itineracies and their success; (4) the members may then proceed to make any new resolutions. The itinerants shall retire while any matter is before the Committee, relating to the several districts in which they respectively labour. In discussing any subject only one person shall speak at once and that standing and addressing himself to the Chair. No member of the Committee shall depart from the meeting without leave of the chairman.

8. That any resolution may be proposed and passed at the same meeting if it relate merely to the local and temporary business of the Union; but that everything which is of the nature of a general law of the Union shall be proposed at least one half-yearly meeting before that at which it is passed or rejected. Every such general law shall be recorded in a book, which shall be appropriated to that special purpose, and shall be in the hands of the secretary, ready for reference at all the meetings of the Union.

9. That when the treasurer and secretary shall deem any business of sufficient urgency and importance, or shall receive a requisition, signed by any five or more members of the Committee, they shall call an extra meeting, by giving notice of it in the usual way to each of the ministers and churches, and that such extra meetings shall be held at Northwich, as the place most central and convenient for all the members.

10. That no minister or other person be authorised to itinerate in the name of the Union until his character, sentiments, and necessary qualifications shall have been inquired into by the secretary, who shall receive all applications, and make or decline all temporary engagements, and shall report his proceedings to the next meeting which alone shall make a permanent appointment. That no person shall be chosen to labour permanently as an itinerant under the patronage of the Union without having first preached and been approved of at a General Meeting. That every itinerant shall be considered as indispensably bound to communicate to the secretary, every half-year at least, a written account of his proceedings and labours, to be read to the Committee at the half-yearly meeting; and that such accounts shall not be received by the Committee, except by a special vote, unless they have been sent to the secretary at least a fortnight before the meeting.

11. That no part of the funds of the Union shall be expended otherwise than by a vote of the Committee, except the necessary and

incidental expenses of the treasurer and secretary, or those of any minister who shall be requested by the secretary in writing to visit the district of any itinerant. The treasurer or secretary, however, shall have a discretionary power to expend any sum not exceeding £5 in fitting up any room or place of worship, without the previous vote of the Committee.

12. That printed Reports of the state and proceedings of the Union shall be issued at such times as shall be appointed by the Committee. Every such Report shall be drawn up and read to a General Meeting previously to the printing of it. In future the names of all subscribers to the funds, to the amount of 10s. and upwards, shall be printed and annexed to the Report.

### III

#### RULES AS REVISED IN 1848

The revised Laws of the "Cheshire Congregational Home Missionary Society," adopted at the Annual Meeting held at the Independent Chapel, Crewe, on Thursday, April 27, 1848.

1. *Name.*—The Cheshire Congregational Home Missionary Society, formerly called the Cheshire Union.

2. *Constitution.*—The Society shall consist of Congregational churches situated in the County of Chester, making an annual collection in aid of its funds.

3. *Object.*—The main object of the Society shall be the diffusion of Christianity in connection with Congregational principles in the County of Chester; which object it shall seek to advance by promoting the preaching of the Gospel in neglected districts, and by imparting aid to churches requiring pecuniary assistance.

4. *Government.*—The government of the Society shall be vested in a General Committee or Conference, annually convened in the month of April, to be composed of the pastor and two delegates from each church contributing to the funds, and all annual subscribers of £1, 1s. and upwards.

5. The General Committee or Conference thus constituted shall appoint a treasurer, general secretary, and also auditors for the current year, shall make all grants of money, and shall exercise supreme control over all the affairs of the Society.

6. The treasurer shall receive all contributions and pay all grants, shall present to the Annual Meeting an audited account of the receipts and expenditure of the year, and shall furnish a list of the churches from which no contributions have been received.

7. The general secretary shall summon the Annual Meeting of the General Committee, shall present at the meeting a Report of the proceedings of the Society during the year, and shall keep a record of all its transactions.

8. The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be as follows : (1) prayer; (2) elect chairman; (3) confirmation of minutes of last meeting; (4) admission of new churches; (5) reception of the secretary's report and treasurer's statement; (6) letters of application for renewal of grants to be read and considered; (7) new cases to be considered; (8) motions, notices of which have been given, to be brought forward; (9) notices of motions for next meeting;



(10) appointment of next place of meeting and miscellaneous business; (11) prayer.

#### DISTRICT COMMITTEES

9. For the supervision of the stations between the Annual Meetings the General Committee shall be divided into two District Committees, a northern and a southern; the former to include those members who reside in the northern parliamentary division of the County, and the latter those in the southern.

10. Each District Committee shall appoint a district secretary; shall superintend the administration of the grants made at the Annual Meetings to stations within its limits; and shall consider and suggest to the General Committee, through its secretary, the best means of promoting the objects of the Society in its own locality.

11. Each District Committee shall meet within six months, at least, of the last Annual Meeting, and as often as may be deemed requisite; and shall appoint, at its first meeting, a deputation to visit each station under its supervision.

12. The district secretaries, one month before the Annual Meeting, shall transmit to the general secretary all information concerning the operations of the Society in their own districts, necessary for the preparation of the Annual Report.

#### MISCELLANEOUS RULES

13. Every church receiving or desiring aid from the Society shall send to the general secretary, one month before the Annual Meeting, a letter of application containing such statistical information as may be required; and, whenever practicable, shall be expected to send a delegate to the Annual Meeting.

14. All grants shall be payable in quarterly instalments, unless it be objected to in any particular case (or cases) by the District Committee, or otherwise directed by the Annual Meeting.

15. Churches reported at two Annual Meetings as having sent no contributions, notwithstanding application having been duly made for the same by the district secretary, shall be considered as withdrawn; and all questions respecting admission or exclusion of churches shall be decided by the Annual Meetings alone.

16. The report of the general secretary and the treasurer's account shall be annually published after the revision and approval of the Annual Meeting.

17. Public services, in connection with District or General Meetings, shall be arranged by their respective secretaries with the church where the meeting is held.

18. This Society shall not, either directly or indirectly, interfere with the erection of chapels or the liquidation of chapel debts, or with the discipline of particular churches; but it is expected that any church receiving aid, about to erect a new place of worship or elect a pastor, will give information of their proceedings to the secretary of the district.

19. No matters of national or religious interest, unconnected with the general business of the Society, shall be brought forward at the Annual Meeting under the designation of miscellaneous business,



unless thirty members of the General Committee be present, and no resolution respecting such matters shall involve any grant of money, or be understood to express the opinion of others than the parties then present.

20. No Rule shall be altered except at an Annual Meeting, notice of such proposed alteration having been given at the preceding meeting.

## IV

## AS REVISED IN 1865

The Cheshire Congregational Union, established 1806. Laws of the Union as revised and adopted by the Annual Meeting, held at Sale, April 26th, 1865.

1. The name of the Association shall be "The Cheshire Congregational Union."

2. The Union shall consist of churches and their pastors of the Congregational Order making an annual contribution in aid of its funds; together with such Congregational ministers resident in the County, not having pastoral charges, and such annual subscribers of 10s. 6d. and upwards, as may from time to time be admitted.

3. The objects of the Union shall be the promotion of Unity, Peace, and Order among the associated Ministers and Churches; the diffusion of Christianity in connection with Congregational principles, in the County, by promoting the preaching of the Gospel in neglected districts, and by aiding churches requiring pecuniary help; and co-operation with other County Unions, and with the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

4. The government of the Union shall be vested in a General Assembly annually convened in the month of April, consisting of pastors and delegates of the united churches, and personal members. Each church shall be entitled to send two delegates, and an additional delegate for every fifty members above the first hundred.

5. The General Assembly shall annually appoint a treasurer, secretary, auditors, and Executive Committee—shall make all grants of money, and control all the affairs of the Union.

6. The treasurer shall receive all contributions, make all authorised payments, and present at the Annual Meeting an audited account of the receipts and expenditure of the year. The Treasurer's account shall close each year on the 31st of March.

7. The secretary shall convene the General Assembly, keep a record of its transactions, and, under the sanction of the Executive Committee, draw up and present the Annual Report.

8. The Executive Committee shall consist of the treasurer and secretary, and twelve members:—shall carry out the decisions of the General Assembly, appoint deputations to visit the churches and stations, receive and report all applications for Grants, arrange the times of payment, and prepare the business for the Annual Meeting.

9. For the more efficient realisation of the objects specified, the Union shall be divided into five districts, of which the following places shall be centres—Chester, Nantwich, Macclesfield, Stockport, Bowdon.

10. Each district shall be superintended by a Committee, consisting of the pastors and delegates within its range, who shall meet quarterly, to confer about the supply of dependant churches and stations, and the effective working of the district, and who shall be responsible to the General Assembly for the expenditure of the Annual Grants.

11. Every church or station desiring aid from the Union shall send a letter of application to the District Committee, who shall forward it to the general secretary, *before* the 31st of March, in each year. No applications for a grant of money shall be entertained by the General Assembly unless it has previously come under the consideration of the Executive Committee.

12. Churches, ministers, and subscribers who may desire to join the Union shall in all cases be proposed at the Annual Meeting, and admitted by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the Members present. Ministers who have been members of other County Unions, shall produce testimonials from those Unions. All transfers or exclusions of members or churches shall be decided upon by the General Assembly.

13. In future settlements no grant shall be made to any church which will not, with the aid of the Union, give a salary of at least £100 per annum to its pastor.

14. The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be as follows:—(1) prayer; (2) chairman's address; (3) confirmation of minutes of last meeting; (4) admission of new churches and personal members; (5) reception of secretary's report and treasurer's statement; (6) letters of applications for renewal of grants to be read and considered; (7) new cases to be considered; (8) motions, notices of which have been given at last meeting or through the Executive Committee in the convening circular, to be brought forward; (9) notices of motions for next meeting; (10) appointment of officers, of next place of meeting, of chairman for the ensuing year, and miscellaneous business; (11) prayer.

15. No rule shall be altered except at the Annual Meeting; notice of the proposed alteration having been given at the preceding meeting.

## V

### AS REVISED IN 1872

The Cheshire Congregational Union, established 1806. Laws of the Union as revised and adopted by the Annual Meeting, held at Chester, April 24th, 1872.

1. The name of the Association shall be "The Cheshire Congregational Union."

2. The Union shall consist of churches of the Congregational Order making an annual contribution in aid of its funds, of pastors of such churches, of Congregational ministers resident in the County not having pastoral charges, of annual subscribers of 10s. 6d. and upwards, and of donors of £10 and upwards so long as they continue in full fellowship with a Congregational church; admission in every case to be by special vote in accordance with Rule 12.

3. The objects of the Union shall be the promotion of Unity, Peace, and Order among the associated ministers and churches; the

diffusion of Christianity in connection with Congregational principles in the County, by promoting the preaching of the Gospel in neglected districts and by aiding churches requiring pecuniary help; and co-operation with other County Unions, and with the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

4. The government of the Union shall be vested in a General Assembly annually convened in the month of April, consisting of pastors and delegates of the United churches, and personal members. Each church shall be entitled to send two delegates, and an additional delegate for every fifty members above the first hundred.

5. The General Assembly shall annually appoint a treasurer, secretary, auditors, and Executive Committee—shall make all grants of money, and control all the affairs of the Union.

6. The treasurer shall receive all contributions, make all authorised payments, and present at the Annual Meeting an audited account of the receipts and expenditure of the year. The treasurer's account shall close each year on the 31st of March.

7. The secretary shall, under the sanction of the Executive Committee, convene the General Assembly, keep a record of its transactions, draw up and present the Annual Report, and keep a revised Roll to be printed each year along with the Report.

8. The Executive Committee shall consist of the chairman, chairman elect, treasurer, secretary, district secretaries, and ten members: shall carry out the decisions of the General Assembly, appoint deputations to visit the churches and stations, receive and report all applications for grants, arrange the times of payment, and prepare the business for the Annual Meeting.

9. For the more efficient realisation of the objects specified, the Union shall be divided into five districts, of which the following places shall be centres—Chester, Nantwich, Macclesfield, Stockport, Bowdon.

10. Each district shall be superintended by a committee, consisting of the pastors and delegates within its range, who shall meet quarterly, to confer about the supply of dependant churches and stations, and the effective working of the district, and who shall be responsible to the General Assembly for the expenditure of the Annual Grants.

11. Every church or station desiring aid from the Union shall send a letter of application to the District Committee, who shall forward it to the general secretary, *before* the 31st of March in each year. No applications for a grant of money shall be entertained by the General Assembly, unless it has previously come under the consideration of the Executive and District Committees.

12. Churches, ministers, and subscribers who may desire to join the Union shall in all cases be proposed at the Annual Meeting, and admitted by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the members present. Ministers who have been members of other County Unions shall produce testimonials from those Unions. All admissions, transfers, and exclusions of members or churches shall be decided upon by the General Assembly, having first been brought before the District and Executive Committees.

13. In future settlements no grant shall be made to any church which will not, with the aid of the Union, give a salary of at least £100 per annum to its pastor.

14. The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be as

follows:—(1) prayer; (2) chairman's address; (3) confirmation of minutes of last meeting; (4) admission of new churches and personal members; (5) reception of secretary's report and treasurer's statement; (6) letters of application for renewal of grants to be read and considered; (7) new cases to be considered; (8) motions, notices of which have been given at last meeting or through the Executive Committee in the convening circular, to be brought forward; (9) notices of motions for next meeting; (10) appointment of officers, of next place of meeting, of chairman for the ensuing year, and miscellaneous business; (11) prayer.

15. No rule shall be altered except at the Annual Meeting; notice of the proposed alteration having been given at the preceding meeting.

## VI

### AS REVISED IN 1880

The Cheshire Congregational Union (in connection with the Congregational Church Aid and Home Missionary Society). Laws of the Union as revised and adopted by the Annual Meeting, held at Rock Ferry, March 4, 1880.

1. The name of the Association shall be "The Cheshire Congregational Union."

2. The Union shall consist of churches of the Congregational Order making an annual contribution in aid of its funds, of pastors of such churches, of evangelists having charge of mission stations or churches, of Congregational ministers resident in the county not having pastoral charges, of annual subscribers of 10s. 6d. and upwards, and of donors of £10 and upwards so long as they continue in full fellowship with a Congregational church; admission in every case to be by special vote in accordance with Rule 12.

3. The objects of the Union shall be the co-operation of the associated ministers and churches, for the diffusion of Christianity in connection with Congregational principles, the promotion of the preaching of the Gospel in neglected districts, and the aiding of churches requiring pecuniary help.

4. The government of the Union shall be vested in a General Assembly annually convened in the months of March or April, consisting of pastors, evangelists, and delegates of the united churches, and personal members. Each church shall be entitled to send two delegates, and an additional delegate for every fifty members above the first hundred.

5. The General Assembly shall annually appoint a treasurer, secretary, auditors, and Executive Committee—shall make all grants of money, and control all the affairs of the Union.

6. The treasurer shall receive all contributions, make all authorised payments, and present at the Annual Meeting an audited account of the receipts and expenditure of the year. The treasurer's account shall close each year on the 31st of December.

7. The secretary shall, under the sanction of the Executive Committee, convene the General Assembly, keep a record of its transactions, draw up and present the Annual Report, and keep a revised roll to be printed each year along with the Report.

8. The Executive Committee shall consist of the chairman, chair-



man elect, treasurer, secretary, district secretaries, and ten members : shall carry out the decisions of the General Assembly, appoint deputations to visit the churches and stations, receive and report all applications for grants, arrange the times of payment, draw up annual budget for the Church Aid Society, and prepare the business for the Annual Meeting.

9. For the more efficient realisation of the objects specified, the Union shall be divided into five districts, of which the following places shall be centres :—Bowdon, Chester, Crewe, Macclesfield, Stockport.

10. Each district shall be superintended by a Committee, consisting of the pastors, evangelists, and delegates within its range, who shall meet quarterly, to confer about the condition of dependent churches and stations, and the effective working of the district, and who shall be responsible to the General Assembly for the expenditure of the annual grants.

11. Every church or station desiring aid from the Union shall send a letter of application to the District Committee, who shall forward it to the general secretary, *before* the 31st of December in each year. No application for a grant of money shall be entertained by the General Assembly unless it has previously come under the consideration of the Executive and District Committees.

12. Churches, ministers, evangelists, and subscribers who may desire to join the Union shall in all cases be proposed at the Annual Meeting, and admitted by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the members present. Ministers who have been members of other County Unions shall produce testimonials from those Unions. All admissions, transfers, and exclusions of members or churches shall be decided upon by the General Assembly, having first been brought before the District and Executive Committees.

13. That before a church receiving assistance from the Union invites a minister to become its pastor, an opportunity shall be afforded to the Executive Committee of expressing its approval or otherwise.

14. No rule shall be altered except at the Annual Meeting—written notice of the proposed alteration having been given to the secretary not less than one month before such meeting.

#### STANDING ORDER

The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be as follows :—

- (1) the Annual Meeting shall open and close with devotional services ;
- (2) chairman's address ; (3) confirmation of minutes of last meeting ;
- (4) admission of new churches and personal members ; (5) reception of secretary's report and treasurer's statement ; (6) letters of application for renewal of grants to be read and considered ; (7) new cases to be considered ; (8) motions, notices of which have been given at last meeting, or through the Executive Committee in the convening circular, to be brought forward ; (9) notices of motions for next meeting ; (10) appointment of officers, of next place of meeting, of chairman for the ensuing year, and miscellaneous business.



## VII

AS REVISED IN 1906

Laws of the Union, as revised and adopted by the Annual Meeting making at Stockport, April 5, 1906.

1. The name of the Association shall be "The Cheshire Union of Congregational Churches."

2. The Union shall consist of churches of the Congregational Order making an annual contribution in aid of its funds, of pastors of such churches, of evangelists having charge of mission stations or churches, of Congregational ministers resident in the County not having pastoral charges, of annual subscribers of 5s. and upwards and of donors of £10 and upwards so long as they continue in full fellowship with a Congregational church which is itself within the Union; admission in every case to be by special vote in accordance with Rule 12.

3. The objects of the Union shall be the co-operation of the associated ministers and churches, for the diffusion of Christianity in connection with Congregational principles, the promotion of the preaching of the Gospel in neglected districts, the establishment of churches in new neighbourhoods and the aiding of churches requiring pecuniary help.

4. The government of the Union shall be vested in an Assembly annually convened in the months of March or April, consisting of pastors, evangelists, and delegates of the united churches, and personal members. Each church shall be entitled to send two delegates, and an additional delegate for every fifty members above the first hundred.

5. The Assembly shall annually appoint a treasurer, secretary or secretaries, auditors, and Executive Committee—shall make all grants of money, and control all the affairs of the Union.

6. The treasurer shall receive all contributions, make all authorised payments, and present at the Annual Meeting an audited account of the receipts and expenditure of the year. The treasurer's account shall close each year on the 31st of December.

7. The secretary shall, under the sanction of the Executive Committee, convene the Assembly, keep a record of its transactions, draw up and present the Annual Report, and keep a revised roll to be printed each year along with the Report.

8. The Executive Committee shall consist of the chairman, ex-chairman, chairman-elect, treasurer, secretary or secretaries, district secretaries, and sixteen members—shall carry out the decisions of the Assembly, appoint deputations to visit the churches and stations, receive and report all applications for grants, arrange the times of payment, and prepare the business for the Annual Meeting.

The constitution of the Executive Committee shall be as follows :  
 12 members nominated by the districts, viz., Bowdon, 2 ;  
 Chester, 2 ; Crewe, 2 ; Stockport and Macclesfield, 4 ; Wirral, 2 ;  
 and 4 co-opted by the Executive itself.

9. For the more efficient realisation of the objects specified, the Union shall be divided into five districts, of which the following places

shall be centres :—Bowdon, Chester, Crewe, Stockport and Macclesfield, and Wirral.

10. Each district shall be superintended by a Committee, consisting of the pastors, evangelists, delegates, and members of the Executive Committee within its range, who shall meet quarterly, or at least three times in the year, to confer about the condition of dependent churches and stations, and the effective working of the district, and who shall be responsible to the Assembly for the expenditure of the annual grants.

11. Every church or station desiring aid from the Union shall send a letter of application to the District Committee, who shall forward it to the general secretary *before* the 31st of December in each year. No application for a grant of money shall be entertained by the Assembly unless it has previously come under the consideration of the Executive and District Committees.

In order to secure full and free consideration the Committees are recommended to request the representatives of each church applying to withdraw while the discussion in that particular case is taken.

12. Churches, ministers, evangelists, and subscribers who may desire to join the Union shall in all cases be proposed at the Annual Meeting, and admitted by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the members present. Ministers who have been members of other County Unions shall produce testimonials from those Unions. All admissions, transfers, and exclusions of members or churches shall be decided upon by the Assembly, having first been brought before the Executive Committee.

The Rules relating to the recognition of churches and ministers adopted in the various County Unions are incorporated with our own Rules and are appended, with the addition of note (d) to B. iii.<sup>1</sup>

13. In order to protect the Aided Churches against the entrance to our ministry of unsuitable men, it is required as an absolute condition of grant that no invitation be given to any person to accept the pastorate, or even to supply the pulpit with a recognised view to the pastorate, without the approval of the Executive.

14. No Rule shall be altered except at the Annual Meeting—notice of the proposed alteration having been given in writing to the secretary not less than one month before such meeting, and printed in the circular convening the meeting.

#### STANDING ORDER

The order of business at the Annual Meeting shall be as follows :—

- (1) the Annual Meeting shall open and close with devotional services ;
- (2) confirmation of minutes of last meeting ;
- (3) admission of new churches and personal members ;
- (4) chairman's address ;
- (5) recep-

<sup>1</sup> (d) A minister wishing to enter into the Denomination under circumstances not covered by these Rules shall fully comply with the requirements of B. iii. and also obtain the written recommendation of two accredited ministers of the Union.

tion of secretary's report and treasurer's statement; (6) letters of application for renewal of grants to be read and considered; (7) new cases to be considered; (8) motions, notices of which have been given at last meeting, or through the Executive Committee in the convening circular, to be brought forward; (9) notices of motions for next meeting; (10) appointment of officers, of next place of meeting, of chairman for the ensuing year, and miscellaneous business.

Congregational Union of England and Wales. Rules relating to the recognition of churches and ministers proposed for adoption in every county union, as accepted at a Conference of Representatives of County Unions, February 24, 1903.

#### A.—CHURCHES

Churches may be affiliated with the County Union by the vote of its Assembly on the recommendation of its Executive Committee, such churches to contribute annually to the funds of the Union.

Every affiliated church shall have the right of representation at the Annual Meeting, both by the pastor, if duly elected as a member of the Union, and by delegates in at least the following proportion—viz., one for each church having not more than fifty members, with an additional delegate for every additional fifty members.

Any church neglecting to contribute to the funds of the Union shall receive notice from the treasurer that contribution is necessary to membership.

#### B.—MINISTERS

All Congregational ministers resident within the area of the Union, and in fellowship with a Congregational Church, shall be eligible for membership by the vote of the Annual Meeting, or of the Executive Committee, subject to the approval of the Annual Meeting, provided that—

1. In the case of a minister coming from a recognised college, he shall procure an official recommendation from the Governing Body.

2. In the case of a minister having held the pastorate of a Congregational church beyond the area of the County Union, he shall secure a letter of commendation from the County Union, or its Executive Committee, within whose area he has exercised his ministry.

3. In the case of a minister from another denomination who has received a call to the pastorate of a Congregational church, he shall give satisfactory evidence as to his Christian character, ministerial training or status, and efficiency, as to his acquaintance with and acceptance of the faith and polity of the Congregational churches, and as to his having been a member of a Congregational church for not less than six months, together with the official certification usually recognised in the denomination he is leaving.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NOTE.—In the case of any one desiring to become a Congregational minister, who, although engaged in evangelistic or other work, has had no adequate collegiate training, he shall be required—

(a) To furnish evidence as to character, efficiency, and faith, as in Paragraph iii., and

(b) To undergo a course of study, including the passing of annual examinations, extending over three years, in a manner which shall be satisfactory to the Executive.

(c) The course of study shall be the same for all counties, and the syllabus shall be determined, and the yearly examinations locally conducted, under the direction of a Board of Examiners, appointed by the Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales,

## C.—CHURCHES AND MINISTERS

1. The County Union retains the right to suspend or remove from its membership any church, minister, or other member, by the vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting, provided that a special intimation shall have been sent by its secretary to the church, minister, or other member in question, at least a month beforehand.

2. When compiling the List of Churches and Ministers for the "Congregational Year Book," it shall be the duty of every county secretary to transmit to the editor, not later than the 31st of October in each year, a list of—

(a) Those churches *only* which are affiliated with, or recognised by, the County Union, and

(b) Those ministers *only* who are members of the Union, and actually resident within its area or the immediate neighbourhood.

3. Ministers removing after the Annual Meeting of their own County Union to another county may be provisionally returned by the secretary of the County Union into whose area they enter, although they are not yet members thereof, provided that the secretary of the County Union in which they were last included shall have stated in writing that letters of commendation of them are likely to be granted.<sup>1</sup>

4. Ministers or students accepting a call after the Annual Meeting may also be provisionally returned by the secretary.

## D.—AIDED CHURCHES

In order to protect the Aided Churches against the entrance to our ministry of unsuitable men, it is required as an absolute condition of grant that no invitation be given to any person to accept the pastorate, or even to supply the pulpit with a recognised view to the pastorate, without the approval of the Executive.

## E.—ORDINATIONS AND RECOGNITION SERVICES

Inasmuch as the ordination or recognition of any person as a pastor is a matter deeply affecting the welfare of all the churches, every church in this County Union is urged to require that no ordination or recognition service shall take place without the concurrence and approval of the County Union expressed by the presence of one or more of its appointed representatives. It is further recommended that no ministerial member of this Union take part in, or otherwise sanction the ordination or recognition of a pastor of any Congregational Church without first communicating with the secretary of the County Union, and ascertaining that such person is duly accredited.

<sup>1</sup> The responsibility for seeing that this is done rests upon the minister concerned, not upon the secretary.

## APPENDIX VIII

### CHESHIRE UNION—RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE

1806-07. There is no record of expenditure, but the receipts amounted to £181, 10s. 8½d. from eight churches, viz.—

|   | £  | s. | d. |
|---|----|----|----|
| Stockport—Orchard St. . . .                 | 78 | 16 | 6  |
| Stockport Old Chapel (Tabernacle) . . . . . | 23 | 0  | 2½ |
| Macclesfield . . . . .                      | 21 | 2  | 0  |
| Congleton . . . . .                         | 21 | 5  | 0  |
| Northwich and Middlewich . . . . .          | 7  | 7  | 0  |
| Nantwich . . . . .                          | 20 | 0  | 0  |
| Tintwistle . . . . .                        | 10 | 0  | 0  |

There was, in addition, a donation of £20 from Mr. Thomas Jones, of Chester.

|                         | <i>Income.</i> |    |     | <i>Expenditure.</i> |     |     |  |
|-------------------------|----------------|----|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|--|
|                         | £              | s. | d.  | £                   | s.  | d.  |  |
| Feb.-Sept.<br>1807-08.  | 412            | 18 | 5¾  | 233                 | 18  | 11  |  |
|                         |                |    |     | Interest            | 11  | 18  |  |
|                         |                |    |     |                     | 178 | 19  | 6¾                                     |
|                         |                |    |     |                     | 190 | 18  | 2                                      |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | } balance in hand<br>(Sept. 14, 1808). |
| Jan.-Sept.<br>1809.     | 236            | 16 | 3   |                     |     |     |  |
| Balance                 | 190            | 18 | 2   |                     |     |     |  |
|                         | 427            | 14 | 5   | 174                 | 2   | 6   |  |
| Sept.-Sept.<br>1809-11. | 509            | 7  | 9½  | 515                 | 1   | 7   |  |
| April-Oct.<br>1815-16.  | 577            | 15 | 0   | 598                 | 19  | 3   |  |
| Sept.-Sept.<br>1819-20. | 236            | 17 | 5½  | 287                 | 0   | 1   |  |
| Sept.-Sept.<br>1820-21. | 259            | 14 | 11¼ | 277                 | 19  | 0   |  |
| Sept.-Sept.<br>1821-22. | 243            | 16 | 1½  | 264                 | 6   | 11¼ |  |
| Oct.-Oct.<br>1827-28.   | 220            | 15 | 3   | 221                 | 7   | 3½  |  |
|                         |                |    |     | 306                 |     |     |  |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | } balance in hand<br>(Sept. 6, 1809).  |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | } balance in hand<br>(Sept. 11, 1811). |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | } balance in hand<br>(Oct. —, 1816).   |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | due to treasurer.                      |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | „ „                                    |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | „ „                                    |
|                         |                |    |     |                     |     |     | „ „                                    |



|                          | <i>Income.</i> |    |                | <i>Expenditure.</i> |    |    |     |    |    |                   |
|--------------------------|----------------|----|----------------|---------------------|----|----|-----|----|----|-------------------|
|                          | £              | s. | d.             | £                   | s. | d. | £   | s. | d. |                   |
| Sept.-Sept.<br>1832-33.  | 302            | 18 | 2½             | 292                 | 12 | 8½ | 10  | 5  | 6  | balance in hand.  |
| April-Sept.<br>1838-39.  | 432            | 0  | 1½             | 462                 | 1  | 8½ | 30  | 1  | 7  | due to treasurer. |
| Oct.-Sept.<br>1840-41.   | 396            | 18 | 8              | 440                 | 4  | 4  | 43  | 5  | 8  | " "               |
| May-April.<br>1846-47.   | 184            | 0  | 2              | 263                 | 15 | 6  | 79  | 15 | 4  | due to treasurer. |
| Sept.-April.<br>1847-49. | 252            | 10 | 3½             | 312                 | 12 | 8  | 60  | 2  | 4½ | " "               |
| April-April.<br>1849-50. | 212            | 13 | 7½             | 246                 | 14 | 2½ | 34  | 0  | 7  | due to treasurer. |
| April-April.<br>1850-51. | 178            | 6  | 0              | 235                 | 14 | 1  | 57  | 8  | 1  | " "               |
| April-April.<br>1851-52. | 160            | 14 | 2              | 235                 | 13 | 3  | 74  | 19 | 1  | " "               |
| April-May.<br>1854-55.   | 165            | 2  | 4              | 246                 | 19 | 1  | 81  | 16 | 9  | " "               |
| 1855-56.                 | 175            | 7  | 10             | 395                 | 4  | 8  | 219 | 16 | 10 | " "               |
| 1856-57.                 | 257            | 12 | 9              | —                   |    |    | 46  | 14 | 10 | " "               |
| 1857-58.                 | 209            | 12 | 7              | 168                 | 13 | 4  | 40  | 19 | 3  | balance in hand.  |
| April.<br>1858-59.       | 203            | 14 | 0½             | 140                 | 0  | 3  | 63  | 13 | 9½ | " "               |
| 1859-60.                 | 268            | 13 | 4              | 133                 | 13 | 5  | 134 | 19 | 11 | " "               |
| 1860-61.                 | 330            | 6  | 3              | 227                 | 7  | 7  | 102 | 18 | 8  | " "               |
| 1861-62.                 | 280            | 1  | 0              | 216                 | 15 | 9  | 63  | 5  | 3  | " "               |
| 1862-63.                 | 228            | 13 | 7              | 198                 | 0  | 6  | 30  | 13 | 1  | " "               |
| 1863-64.                 | 230            | 9  | 0½             | 175                 | 4  | 3  | 55  | 4  | 9½ | " "               |
| 1864-65.                 | 229            | 11 | 4½             | 178                 | 2  | 2  | 51  | 9  | 2½ | " "               |
| 1865-66.                 | 262            | 11 | 6              | 278                 | 8  | 0  | 15  | 16 | 6  | due to treasurer. |
| March.<br>1866-67.       | 366            | 19 | 3 <sup>1</sup> | 366                 | 19 | 3  | —   |    |    |                   |
| 1867-68.                 | 517            | 5  | 5              | 362                 | 4  | 11 | 155 | 0  | 6  | balance in hand.  |
| 1868-69.                 | 710            | 18 | 2 <sup>2</sup> | 400                 | 15 | 9  | 310 | 2  | 5  | " "               |
| 1869-70.                 | 821            | 6  | 0              | 617                 | 15 | 2  | 203 | 10 | 10 | " "               |
| 1870-71.                 | 594            | 6  | 1              | 549                 | 13 | 1  | 44  | 13 | 0  | " "               |
| 1871-72.                 | 556            | 6  | 11             | 528                 | 15 | 1  | 27  | 11 | 10 | " "               |
| 1872-73.                 | 393            | 14 | 2½             | 430                 | 3  | 0½ | 36  | 8  | 10 | due to treasurer. |
| 1873-74.                 | 125            | 8  | 1 <sup>3</sup> |                     |    |    |     |    |    |                   |
|                          | 585            | 17 | 5              |                     |    |    |     |    |    |                   |
|                          | 8              | 19 | 0 <sup>4</sup> |                     |    |    |     |    |    |                   |
|                          | 720            | 4  | 6              | 565                 | 12 | 0  | 154 | 12 | 6  | balance in hand.  |
| 1874-75.                 | 808            | 8  | 10½            | 462                 | 8  | 5½ | 346 | 0  | 5  | " "               |
| 1875-76.                 | 988            | 8  | 3              | 567                 | 16 | 6  | 420 | 11 | 9  | " "               |
| 1876-77.                 | 1038           | 8  | 7              | 769                 | 9  | 8  | 268 | 18 | 11 | " "               |
| March.<br>1877-78.       | 870            | 13 | 10             | 807                 | 13 | 6  | 63  | 0  | 4  | " "               |
| 1878-79.                 | 725            | 8  | 4              | 729                 | 18 | 2  | 4   | 9  | 10 | due to treasurer. |

<sup>1</sup> Obtained by raising enough to meet claims, £351, 2s. 9d., and pay balance of £15, 16s. 6d., due to treasurer.

<sup>3</sup> Contributions for Special Fund.

<sup>2</sup> Including £50 from Mr. Morley.

<sup>4</sup> From Hodson's Estate.

| Mar.-Dec. | <i>Income.</i> |    |                 | <i>Expenditure.</i> |    |                  |     |    |    |                   |
|-----------|----------------|----|-----------------|---------------------|----|------------------|-----|----|----|-------------------|
|           | £              | s. | d.              | £                   | s. | d.               | £   | s. | d. |                   |
| 1879.     | 456            | 6  | 9               | 449                 | 10 | 6                | 6   | 16 | 3  | balance in hand.  |
| Jan. rst. |                |    |                 |                     |    |                  |     |    |    |                   |
| 1880.     | 805            | 15 | 4               | 777                 | 9  | 7 <sup>1</sup>   | 28  | 5  | 9  | " "               |
| 1881.     | 702            | 2  | 3               | 683                 | 19 | 5 <sup>2</sup>   | 18  | 2  | 10 | " "               |
| Jan. rst. |                |    |                 |                     |    |                  |     |    |    |                   |
| 1882.     | 797            | 2  | 10              | 800                 | 15 | 6 <sup>3</sup>   | 3   | 12 | 8  | due to treasurer. |
| 1883.     | 806            | 18 | 0               | 715                 | 5  | 10 <sup>4</sup>  | 91  | 12 | 2  | balance in hand.  |
| 1884.     | 965            | 10 | 6               | 918                 | 3  | 11 <sup>5</sup>  | 47  | 6  | 7  | " "               |
| 1885.     | 771            | 2  | 3               | 753                 | 10 | 1 <sup>6</sup>   | 17  | 12 | 2  | " "               |
| 1886.     | 842            | 5  | 8               | 763                 | 4  | 11 <sup>7</sup>  | 79  | 0  | 9  | " "               |
| 1887.     | 1026           | 3  | 8               | 981                 | 1  | 1 <sup>8</sup>   | 45  | 2  | 7  | " "               |
| 1888.     | 855            | 2  | 10              | 865                 | 17 | 2 <sup>9</sup>   | 10  | 14 | 4  | " "               |
| 1889.     | 724            | 9  | 5               | 727                 | 10 | 4 <sup>10</sup>  | 3   | 0  | 11 | due to treasurer. |
| 1890.     | 677            | 10 | 3               | 713                 | 9  | 9 <sup>11</sup>  | 35  | 19 | 6  | " "               |
| 1891.     | 750            | 15 | 9               | 764                 | 8  | 10 <sup>12</sup> | 13  | 13 | 1  | " "               |
| 1892.     | 641            | 15 | 2               | 734                 | 12 | 2 <sup>13</sup>  | 92  | 17 | 0  | " "               |
| 1893.     | 726            | 17 | 2               | 783                 | 11 | 9 <sup>14</sup>  | 56  | 14 | 7  | " "               |
| 1894.     | 712            | 8  | 1               | 839                 | 12 | 3 <sup>15</sup>  | 127 | 4  | 2  | " "               |
| 1895.     | 753            | 14 | 9               | 868                 | 4  | 2 <sup>16</sup>  | 114 | 9  | 5  | " "               |
| 1896.     | 634            | 17 | 11              | 913                 | 6  | 8 <sup>17</sup>  | 278 | 8  | 9  | " "               |
| 1897.     | 754            | 5  | 6 <sup>18</sup> | 993                 | 13 | 8                | 239 | 8  | 2  | " "               |
| 1898.     | 796            | 2  | 3 <sup>19</sup> | 931                 | 17 | 11               | 135 | 15 | 8  | " "               |
| 1899.     | 785            | 9  | 10              | 809                 | 19 | 4                | 24  | 10 | 1  | " "               |
| 1900.     | 686            | 14 | 1               | 732                 | 6  | 4                | 45  | 12 | 3  | " "               |
| 1901.     | 607            | 14 | 1               | 711                 | 3  | 5                | 103 | 9  | 4  | " "               |
| 1902.     | 651            | 8  | 2               | 791                 | 4  | 10               | 139 | 16 | 8  | " "               |
| 1903.     | 632            | 9  | 2               | 763                 | 19 | 4                | 131 | 10 | 2  | " "               |
| 1904.     | 696            | 12 | 11              | 733                 | 12 | 4                | 36  | 19 | 5  | " "               |
| 1905.     | 591            | 18 | 8               | 642                 | 0  | 6                | 50  | 1  | 10 | " "               |

<sup>1</sup> Including £100 to Central Fund of Church and Home Mission Society.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing to Central Fund.

<sup>3</sup> Including £60 free contribution and £100 donation to Central Fund.

<sup>4</sup> Including £100 donation from Bowdon and £90 free contribution to Central Fund.

<sup>5</sup> Including £200 free contribution and £195 donation from Bowdon to Central Fund.

<sup>6</sup> Including £40 free contribution and £115 donation from Bowdon to Central Fund.

<sup>7</sup> Including £35 free contribution, £100 donation from Bowdon to Central Fund, and £3 for Berkshire.

<sup>8</sup> Including £140 free contribution and £272, 10s. donation to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>9</sup> Including £140 free contribution and £147, 10s. donation to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>10</sup> Including £100 free contribution and £66 14s. donation to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>11</sup> Including £100 free contribution and £66, 14s. donation to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>12</sup> Including £100 free contribution and £60, 10s. donation from Bowdon.

<sup>13</sup> Including £120 free contribution and £60, 10s. donation from Bowdon.

<sup>14</sup> Including £61 to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>15</sup> Including £87, 13s. 2d. to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>16</sup> Including £63 to Central Fund from Bowdon.

<sup>17</sup> Including £5, 19s. 7d. to Central Fund from Marple.

<sup>18</sup> Including £163, 13s. 6d. collected by Mr. W. Lees towards last balance.

<sup>19</sup> Including £119, 15s. 3d. for deficiency per Mr. W. Lees.

COLLECTED BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY—  
MR. FORTNUM

| Dec. 1894-95. |    |    |       |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|-------|----|----|
| £             | s. | d. | £     | s. | d. |
| 6             | 1  | 0  | 1     | 4  | 6  |
| 110           | 8  | 6  | 3     | 8  | 0  |
| 0             | 10 | 6  | 13    | 3  | 0  |
| 1             | 0  | 0  | 1     | 0  | 0  |
| 3             | 15 | 6  | 3     | 10 | 0  |
| 5             | 10 | 0  | 1     | 17 | 6  |
| 1             | 15 | 0  | 21    | 0  | 0  |
| 7             | 12 | 6  | 1     | 8  | 6  |
| <hr/>         |    |    | <hr/> |    |    |
| £238          | 13 | 0  | £73   | 18 | 0  |

| Dec. 1895-96. |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|
| £             | s. | d. |
| 2             | 17 | 0  |
| 0             | 10 | 0  |
| 6             | 1  | 0  |
| 5             | 0  | 0  |
| 5             | 4  | 0  |
| 2             | 2  | 0  |
| 0             | 5  | 0  |
| 3             | 5  | 0  |
| 1             | 11 | 6  |
| 0             | 5  | 0  |

| Dec. 1896-97. |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|
| £             | s. | d. |
| 0             | 15 | 0  |
| 1             | 11 | 6  |
| 1             | 5  | 6  |
| 1             | 10 | 0  |
| <hr/>         |    |    |
| £5            | 2  | 0  |

| Dec. 31, 1897-98. |    |    |
|-------------------|----|----|
| £                 | s. | d. |
| 5                 | 0  | 8  |

## Liscard Church—

|                      |       | £     | s. | d. |
|----------------------|-------|-------|----|----|
| Halfpenny Envelopes. | 1893. | 17    | 4  | 2  |
|                      | 1894. | 17    | 4  | 5  |
|                      | 1895. | 13    | 17 | 10 |
|                      | 1896. | 15    | 5  | 2  |
|                      | 1897. | 15    | 10 | 4  |
|                      | 1898. | 12    | 6  | 10 |
|                      | 1899. | 14    | 6  | 8  |
|                      | 1900. | 16    | 6  | 0  |
|                      | 1901. | 14    | 0  | 0  |
|                      | 1902. | 13    | 4  | 4  |
|                      | 1903. | 15    | 2  | 1  |
|                      | 1904. | 15    | 15 | 6  |
|                      | 1905. | 11    | 11 | 11 |
| <hr/>                |       | <hr/> |    |    |
|                      |       | £191  | 15 | 3  |



# INDEX

## A

Abney, Sir Thomas, 256.  
 Accrington, 18.  
 Acton, 8.  
 Adams, E. L., 160.  
 Adamson, John, 98.  
 — W., 57.  
 Adeney, W. F., 97.  
 Adlington, 8.  
 Adswold, 183, 184.  
 Ainsbury, W. M., 213.  
 Aitken, J. B., 173, 243.  
 Alderley, 8.  
 Alexander, William, 138.  
 Allan, Robert, 213.  
 — W. G., 226.  
 Allardice, D. W., 263.  
 Allen, C. Ll., 187.  
 — E. T. H., 218.  
 — G. J., 44 (*note*), 82, 173, 210.  
 Allott, R., 46, 47, 49, 81, 103.  
 Allon, Henry, 186, 224.  
 Allstock, 14, 110.  
 Alsager, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 148-150.  
 Altrincham, 31, 91, 94, 96.  
 — Congregationalism, 89-94.  
 Anabaptists, 8.  
 Anlezark, Robert, 22, 219.  
 Apethorn, 51, 206.  
 Appendices, 273-309.  
 Armitage, Elkanah, 194.  
 — Falkner, 105.  
 — W., 128.  
 Arrowsmith, G., 57.  
 Arthur, George, 259.  
 — John, 259.  
 Ashcroft, Robert, 259, 261.  
 Ashley Rd., Hale, Congregationalism,  
 101-102.  
 Ashton, Solomon, 23, 24, 216.  
 Asmeron-on-Mersey, 8, 50, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 86-88.  
 Ashworth, Robert, 238, 239.  
 Association of Presbyterian and Inde-  
 pendent Ministers, 8, 9, 11, 207, 214.

Association of Independent Churches  
 in Lancashire, Derbyshire, and  
 Cheshire, 21, 22, 23.  
 Astbury, 3, 7 (*note*), 8, 9.  
 Aston, 57.  
 Athanasian Creed, 12.  
 Atkin, George, 260, 263.  
 Attwood, W., 149.  
 Auchincloss, Thomas, 216.  
 Audlem, 27.

## B

Bagshaw, William, 235.  
 Baguley, 57, 59.  
 — Congregationalism, 88-89.  
 Bailey, James, 180, 181.  
 — J. R., 180.  
 Bake, H., 135.  
 Balshaw, J. A., 246, 247.  
 Baptists, 9, 14, 76.  
 Barker, J. T., 240, 246 (*note*).  
 — P. C., 46, 81, 130.  
 Barnes, F., 45, 48, 66, 81, 120, 124,  
 125, 126, 142, 251, 252.  
 Barnsley, Martha, 228.  
 Barrett, Albert, 109.  
 — W., 207.  
 Barrow, Samuel, 17.  
 Barry, C. J., 226.  
 Bartomley, 8, 9.  
 Barton, 50, 52, 141.  
 — Congregationalism, 116-119.  
 Basden, H. J., 169.  
 Batley, Joseph, 22, 24.  
 Baxter, Richard, 6.  
 Beaumont, Luke, 259, 261.  
 Bedell, James, 108.  
 Belk, C., 134.  
 Bell, A., 199.  
 Benn, Sir J. W., 206.  
 Bennett, Thomas, 184, 192, 245.  
 Benson, J. W., 238, 239, 240, 247.  
 Bertram, R. A., 107.  
 Best, J. W., 183.  
 Bicentenary of Act of Uniformity, 41.



Bicentenary Volume, 42, 193.  
 Bickerton, 141.  
 Binney, Thomas, 74, 183.  
 Birch, H., 134.  
 Birkenhead, 30, 52, 59.  
 — Hamilton Square, 249-251.  
 — Oxtou Road, 251-252.  
 Blackburn, Noah, 24, 245.  
 Blake, W. A., 58, 82, 152, 216, 217, 229.  
 Blakehurst, R. E., 139.  
 Blakeley, Mrs., 266.  
 Blenkarn, J. E., 260.  
 Bollington, 14, 50, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 173.  
 Bolt, J., 208.  
 Bolton, 21, 24, 60, 243, 267.  
 Bond, S., 176.  
 Book of Common Prayer, 2, 5.  
 Booth, George, 191.  
 Bosley, 8, 19.  
 Bostock, B. S., 44, 82, 152, 153.  
 — T. & J., 172.  
 Boughton, 29, 50, 132.  
 — Congregationalism, 120-122.  
 Bowden, J., 212.  
 Bowdon, 2, 8, 9, 14, 41, 69, 88.  
 — Congregationalism, 89-94.  
 — District, History of Churches in, 85-119.  
 — Secretaries, 85.  
 Bowen, S., 209, 270.  
 Bowker, Richard, 154.  
 Bradbury, 14.  
 — Thos., 12, 13.  
 Bradley, 134.  
 Bradshaw, James, 207.  
 Bragg, A. W., 173, 233.  
 Bramhall, 52, 61.  
 — Congregationalism, 177, 178.  
 Bray, J. D., 144.  
 Brereton, 29, 51, 172.  
 Brickhill, Mark, 98.  
 Bridgman, James, 138, 184.  
 Bright, John, 49.  
 Brinksway, 52, 231-233.  
 Bristol, John, 218.  
 Broadheath, 57, 92, 95, 96.  
 — Congregationalism, 97.  
 Bromborough, 14, 15.  
 Brook, Thos., 216.  
 Brookhouse Green, 19, 27.  
 Brown, F. B., 40.  
 — G., 23, 26, 30.  
 — Hugh Stowell, 107, 144.  
 — Isaac, 122.  
 — J., 256.  
 — J. H., 135.  
 — Lawson, 256.  
 Browning, T. H., 209.

Buckley, A., 176.  
 — Alfred, 105.  
 — James, 216.  
 — 51, 147.  
 Bucklow Hill, 31, 32, 39, 40, 52, 89.  
 — Congregationalism, 97-101.  
 Budworth, 8.  
 Bulley, Raffles, 266.  
 Bullock Smithy, 30, 31.  
 Bunbury, 14.  
 Burgess, James, 191.  
 Burial Laws Amendment Act, 73.  
 Burrows, T. Langford, 267.  
 Byrom, John, 214.

## C

Cadishead, 57, 95.  
 Cale Green, 227.  
 Calvert, R., 192, 203.  
 Carrington, S. R., 223.  
 — W. E., 227.  
 Carruthers, Dr., 249.  
 Carter, A., 95, 97, 232.  
 — F., 18 (note), 82, 83, 85, 105, 106, 111, 169.  
 — W. L., 252.  
 Carver, J., 212.  
 — Thos., 212, 213.  
 Cecil, E. G., 108.  
 Chadkirk, 13, 109, 190.  
 Chambers, William, 156.  
 Champness, W., 195, 197, 227.  
 Chapman, Charles, 130.  
 Charles I., 1.  
 Charles of Bala, 124.  
 Charlesworth, 24.  
 Cheadle, 40, 41, 44.  
 — Congregationalism, 178-182.  
 — Heath, 181, 182.  
 — Hulme, 29, 51.  
 — Congregationalism, 182-183.  
 Cheeseman, G. E., 193, 195.  
 Cheshire Home Missionary Society, 35.  
 Cheshire Union—  
 Attitude on Public Questions, 49.  
 Chairmen, 81, 82.  
 Change of name, 43.  
 Formation of, 24-26.  
 Jubilee Meetings, 39.  
 Ministers and Delegates at first meeting, 26.  
 Revision of Rules, 43, 44, 45, 46.  
 Secretaries and Treasurers, 83.  
 Chester, 3 (note), 7 (note), 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 26, 29, 34, 35, 40, 46.

Chester Churches—  
     Northgate, 124-127.  
     Queen Street, 127-130.  
 — District, 120-147.  
 — Secretaries, 120.  
 Chesters, T., 29, 187.  
 Chidlaw, John, 15, 127.  
 Chinese Labour, 49.  
 Chriselton, 50, 121, 131, 132.  
 Christopherson, Rev., 37, 38, 39.  
 Church Aid Society, 65, 67, 69, 71,  
 Church rates, abolition of, 73.  
 Churches once aided, now independent,  
     Appendix IV., 283.  
 Clark, Absalom, 58, 66, 82, 182, 197,  
     221, 227, 246, 247 (*note*).  
 — F., 247, 248.  
 — J. W., 120, 131, 142, 143.  
 — Sidney, 132.  
 Clarke, William, 270, 271.  
 Clegg, Arthur, 114.  
 Clunie, Dr., 205.  
 Cocks, Isaac, 194.  
 Colborne, George, 193, 194.  
 Collyer, Dr., 223.  
 Congleton, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 27, 31,  
     34, 35, 59.  
 — Congregationalism, 184-187  
 Congregational principles, 75, 76.  
 Conventicle Act, 7, 72.  
 Cook, E. Hampden-, 169, 171, 172  
     (*note*).  
 Cooke, William, 9.  
 Coombes, S. M., 134.  
 Cooper, Herbert, 152.  
 — James, 156.  
 Cope, H., 57.  
 — R., 249.  
 Coppenhall Moss, 27.  
 Corporation Act, 73.  
 Cousins, W. P., 177.  
 Coward, Thomas, 192.  
 Cowie, A. H., 65.  
 Craddock, C., 144.  
 Cranbrook, James, 257.  
 Crease, W., 196, 242.  
 Crewdson, Robert, 244.  
 Crewe, 32, 35, 37, 39, 44, 50, 51.  
 — Congregationalism, 150-154.  
 — District, 148-172.  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 4, 5.  
 Crookall, L., 153, 170.  
 Crosfield, William, 265.  
 Cross, William, 130.  
 Crow, George, 260.  
 Crowther, Thomas, 216.  
 Crozier, Mr., 222.  
 Cubbon, John, 181.  
 Culcheth, Thomas, 207.  
 Currie, W., 141.

D

Dackford, 7 (*note*).  
 Dadson, S. W., 175.  
 Dale, R. W., 74, 167.  
 Dallison, Mr., 268 (*note*), 270, 271.  
 Daniell, William, 269.  
 Daresbury, 8.  
 Darlington, Mr., 112.  
 — Miss, 112.  
 Darnal, 15.  
 Darnton, P. W., 54, 55, 81, 120, 122,  
     130, 131.  
 Davenham, 51.  
 — Congregationalism, 112-114.  
 "Davidson" Controversy, 74.  
 Davies, D. R., 169.  
 — Ebenezer, 216.  
 — Eber, 143.  
 — J. Vivian, 161.  
 — R. M., 175.  
 — Theophilus, 195.  
 — Thomas, 139, 149.  
 — T. J., 237.  
 — W. C., 188.  
 Davis, W. J. S., 161.  
 Davison, Thos., 151.  
 Dawson, W., 97, 102, 105.  
 Day, Edwin, 205.  
 Dean, John, 99, 101.  
 — Row, 14.  
 Deaville, J. G., 249, 252.  
 Delamere, 28.  
 De la Rose, Samuel, 215, 216.  
 Delph, 24.  
 Denovan, W. H., 238.  
 Dewhurst, G. C., 107 (*note*).  
 Dillon, E., 201.  
 Directory for Public Worship, 5.  
 Disestablishment of Irish Church,  
     74.  
 Disley, 8.  
 Districts, Bowdon, 85-119.  
 — Chester, 120-147.  
 — Crewe, 148-172.  
 — Stockport and Macclesfield, 173-  
     248.  
 — Wirral, 249-271.  
 Dixon, J. B., 197.  
 Dorling, F. W. R., 111.  
 Dowson, H. E., 206.  
 Dransfield, William, 164 (*note*).  
 Duckinfield, 3, 14, 26, 28, 30, 31, 245,  
     246.  
 Dunham Wood Houses, 57.  
 Dunkerley, Daniel, 209, 216.  
 — David, 209.

## E

- Earnshaw, Charles, 230.  
 — John, 89, 99.  
 Eaton, Samuel, 3 (*note*), 6, 206, 214  
 Eccles, E. Shorrocks, 266.  
 Edge, George, 184.  
 Edwards, Edward, 203.  
 Ejected Ministers, List of, Appendix I.,  
 273-275.  
 Ellis, Samuel, 242.  
 Elton, 15.  
 Emancipation of Slaves, 73.  
 "Essays and Reviews," 74.  
 Evans, Benjamin, 128.  
 — D. B., 212.  
 — D. Wynne, 120, 131, 133  
 — John, 122.  
 — Joseph, 155.  
 — William, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29,  
 34, 37, 128, 137 (*note*), 141 (*note*),  
 162, 219, 245.  
 Exeter, 12, 13.

## F

- Factory Act, 73.  
 Farndon, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 116-119.  
 Farnsworth, Mr., 246.  
 Farnworth, 41.  
 Faulder, Henry, 221.  
 Faulkner, Lot, 181 (*note*).  
 Fell, John, 104.  
 Ferguson, Joseph, 204.  
 Ferrier, J. Todd, 210.  
 Fetter Lane Chapel, 12.  
 Fielden, W., 57, 97.  
 Field Road Mission (Liscard), 258.  
 Finance, Survey of, 62-65.  
 — Tabular View of, Appendix VIII.,  
 306-309.  
 Fletcher, Algernon, 111.  
 — Dr., 131.  
 — Edmund, 216.  
 — Robert, 131.  
 Flintshire, 51.  
 Foden, John, 99.  
 Forster, John, 74.  
 Fortnum, J. W., 70, 156, 158, 309.  
 Foster, C. E., 212.  
 Franks, R. S., 253.  
 Frodsham, 2, 8, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 143-146.  
 Fry, J. Howard, 149, 150, 169, 170,  
 171.  
 Furness Vale, 50, 51, 246.

## G

- Gardner, John, 127.  
 — Henry, 253.  
 Garside, John, 207.  
 Gascoigne, John, 204, 206.  
 Gatley, 26, 29, 30, 50, 52, 89, 92, 94, 96.  
 — Congregationalism, 187-189.  
 Gawsworth, 8, 9, 19.  
 Gee, James, 202.  
 Gent, Peter, 178.  
 Gerrard, E., 83.  
 Gibbon, S., 185.  
 Gibson, A., 241.  
 Gill, William, 101.  
 Gladstone, W. E., 49, 73.  
 Gloucestershire Union, 59.  
 Goolden, Richard, 190.  
 Goostrey, 19.  
 Goward, Charles, 251.  
 Graham, J., 260.  
 Grange, 15.  
 Grant, Mrs. Frances, 260, 261.  
 Grappenhall, 8.  
 Gray, Andrew, 235.  
 — John Comper, 151.  
 Great Boughton, 56.  
 — Budworth, 8.  
 — Moor, 64, 233-235.  
 Green, George, 59.  
 — J., 110.  
 Griffin, James, 192, 205.  
 Griffiths, Henry, 91, 95, 251.  
 — Hugh S., 175, 176.  
 Grimshaw, C. H., 194.  
 Grindal, Archbishop, 1.  
 Gwyther, James, 205.  
 — J. H., 82, 257, 265, 266.

## H

- Hacking, 23.  
 Haines, Thomas, 159.  
 Hale, 14.  
 — Ashley Road Congregationalism,  
 101, 102.  
 — Barns, 29.  
 Halifax, 17.  
 Hall, Isaac, 218, 231.  
 — Robert, 74.  
 Halley, R., 192.  
 Halstead, J. H., 218.  
 Hamer, Abraham, 17.  
 Hampshire Union, 76.  
 Hampson, John, 229.  
 Hancock, G. H., 142.  
 Handbridge, 51, 52, 58, 59, 132.  
 — Congregationalism, 122-124.

- Handforth, J., 26, 184, 187.  
 Hanley, 16.  
 Hannay, Alexander, 67.  
 Hardaker, Mark, 100.  
 Hardie, James, 215.  
 Hargreaves, B., 122.  
 — J., 260.  
 Harker, John, 221, 222.  
 Harries, Henry, 82, 173, 226, 228, 231, 232.  
 Harris, George, 205.  
 — J., 209.  
 — Mr., 117, 133.  
 Harrison, John, 111.  
 — J. Herbert, 101.  
 Harry, W. W., 103, 105.  
 Hart Lane, 50, 51.  
 Hartley, T., 81, 173, 212, 213.  
 Harwood, Mr., 199, 202.  
 Haslington, 27, 28, 39, 50.  
 — Congregationalism, 150-154.  
 Hatherlow, 14, 22, 26, 29, 36, 42.  
 — Congregationalism, 189-194.  
 Hattersley, 8.  
 Hawes, A. E., 152, 183.  
 Haworth, A. A., 82, 184.  
 Hayton, E. R., 186, 237 (*note*), 238.  
 Hazel Grove, 30, 31, 32, 41, 50, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 195-198.  
 Heads of Agreement, 214, 235.  
 Healey, Mr., 196.  
 Heaword, Jos., 229 (*note*).  
 Hedley, E., 230, 231, 234.  
 Heginbotham, William, 190.  
 Hennessey, N. M., 206.  
 Henry, Matthew, 15, 127, 158, 159, 236.  
 Henshall, Peter, 160.  
 Herbert, T. M., 81, 91, 96, 179, 180, 182.  
 Herts Union, 76.  
 Hester, Samuel, 252.  
 Heyhead, 29, 96.  
 Heywood, Oliver, 18.  
 Heyworth, Oliver, 193 (*note*).  
 Higgins, J. T., 122.  
 High Commission Court, 1.  
 High Leigh, 57.  
 Hill Cliff, 14.  
 Hill, James, 168 (*note*).  
 Hillgate (Stockport), 14.  
 Hillyard, S., 139.  
 Hinds, S., 197, 234.  
 Hitchen, Henry, 159, 160.  
 — William, 26, 162.  
 Hitchin, Joseph, 172.  
 — Thomas, 29, 141.  
 Hodgkinson, S., 212 (*note*).  
 — W. S., 212 (*note*).  
 "Hodson's Estate," 132.  
 Holden, John, 93.  
 Holland, Adam, 154, 207.  
 Hollingworth, 31, 37, 39, 41, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 199-201.  
 Holmes, John, 218.  
 Holywell, 43, 51, 146.  
 Honeywood, W., 23.  
 Hood, Paxton, 179.  
 Hooke, D. B., 45, 146.  
 Hoole Road, 132.  
 Hooper, H., 144, 169.  
 — Stephen, 96, 178, 179 (*note*).  
 — Thomas, 206.  
 Hope, John, 122.  
 — J. G., 120, 127 (*note*), 131 (*note*), 133 (*note*), 269, 271.  
 — Peter, 97.  
 — Misses, 97, 98.  
 Horne, D., 149.  
 Hosken, T. J., 217, 218.  
 Howard, Jesse, 222.  
 — Joseph, 238.  
 — Mark, 216.  
 Howes, James, 184.  
 Howson, A., 139.  
 Hoylake, 61.  
 — Congregationalism, 254-256.  
 Hudson, R. S., 64, 122, 123.  
 — William, 22 (*note*), 23, 24, 26, 236, 237.  
 Hughes, G. D., 183, 234.  
 — John, 17, 179 (*note*).  
 — R., 148, 149.  
 — T., 200, 201.  
 Hulme, Rev., 26.  
 Humphries, A., 97.  
 Hunter, John, 91 (*note*), 227 (*note*).  
 Huntingdon, Lady, 138, 160, 184.  
 Huxley, Thomas, 52, 82, 117, 118, 136, 137.  
 Hyde, 14, 29, 41, 50 (*note*), 51.  
 — Union St., 202-205.  
 — Zion, 205-206.

## I

- Idle Academy, 27.  
 Ince, 2.  
 Indemnity Act, 73.  
 Indulgence, Declaration of, 8.  
 Ingleson, S., 212 (*note*).  
 Ireland, W. E., 210.  
 Irving, J., 165.  
 Itinerant Missions, 56, 57.  
 — Society, 22, 23.  
 Ivy, Robert, 245.

## J

- Jackson, Brothers, 161, 164, 166.  
 — J., 26.  
 — J. O., 143, 144.  
 — R. W., 212.  
 Jacobs, D. H., 206.  
 James, A. T. S., 102.  
 — John, 27, 160.  
 Jenkins, Dr., 127.  
 — John, 242.  
 — T., 100.  
 Jesson, J. T., 31, 36 (*note*), 85.  
 Jews, Admission to Parliament, 73.  
 Johnson, John, 184.  
 — Joseph, 82, 87.  
 — Thomas, 172.  
 Johns, J., 57, 81, 85, 111.  
 Jones, F., 125.  
 — Gamaliel, 109, 190, 236 (*note*).  
 — Isaac Oliver, 255.  
 — John, 190, 191.  
 — J. L., 122, 135.  
 — Richard, 121.  
 — Thomas, 26, 30, 129, 179 (*note*).  
 — W., 120, 123, 160.  
 Jordan, D. N., 183.  
 Jowett, J. H., 266.  
 Just, H. J., 204.

## K

- Kay, W., 24.  
 Kelly, John, 138, 259.  
 Kendal, Thomas, 179.  
 Kershaw, James, 149, 229.  
 Kidd, G. B., 30 (*note*), 31, 134, 138, 173, 210, 211.  
 Kightley, Joseph, 107.  
 King, E. Dawson, 97, 104, 105.  
 Kingsley, 14.  
 Kirby, Mr., 154.  
 Knill, Richard, 37, 38, 39, 130, 270.  
 — Samuel, 270.  
 Knolls Green, 50, 51, 52, 96, 104.  
 Knowles, H. D., 250.  
 Knox, J., 260, 263.  
 Knutsford, 2, 6, 8, 9, 14, 16, 19, 26, 27, 35, 42, 46, 50, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 103-106.

## L

- Lamb, Stanley, 253, 260.  
 — William, 111.  
 Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel Building Society, 61.

- Lancashire College, 113.  
 — Union, Formation of, 24.  
 — Nightingale's Story of, 22 (*note*).  
 — Slate's Brief History of, 22 (*note*), 203 (*note*), 205 (*note*).  
 Lancaster, 16.  
 Laundry, S. R., 106.  
 Lavister, 123, 124.  
 Lawton, 27.  
 Le Conteur, James, 256.  
 Lee, Henry, 65.  
 — James, 229.  
 Leek, 19.  
 Lees, Jonathan, 107, 115.  
 — Rev. Jonathan, 115 (*note*).  
 — T. H., 83, 227.  
 — William, 69, 82, 227, 234 (*note*).  
 Legge, J. R., 213.  
 Leicester, 66, 92.  
 — Conference, 74.  
 Leigh, Joseph, 227 (*note*), 231.  
 Lever, W. H., 266, 267.  
 Levitt, James, 238.  
 Lewis, E. W., 250.  
 — R. S., 160.  
 Ley, John, 3.  
 Licenses for Preaching—  
 Appendix II., 276-279.  
 Liscard, 69, 71.  
 — Congregationalism, 256-258.  
 Little Leigh, 57.  
 — Moor, 59.  
 Liverpool, 55, 91.  
 — Chapel Building Society, 61.  
 Livingstone, David, 185.  
 Lloyd, R. W., 56, 121.  
 Lollardry, 1.  
 Long Lane, 29, 180.  
 Lowe, A. H., 197.  
 Lowndes, Charles, 94, 187.  
 Luckett, Henry, 105.  
 Luke, S., 31, 89, 129, 130, 168 (*note*), 249, 256, 270.  
 Lumsden, R. C., 179.  
 Lunt, T., 168.  
 Lupton, Rev., 171.  
 Lymm, 8, 14, 40, 50, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 107-109.

## M

- Macclesfield, 2, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26, 34 (*note*), 40, 44 (*note*), 50.  
 — Churches—  
 Roe St., 210-212.  
 Townley St. and Park Green, 206-210.  
 — Congregationalism, 206-212.



Macclesfield and Stockport Districts,  
173-248.  
M'All, R. S., 210, 223.  
— S. W., 209.  
Macfadyen, A., 58, 117, 144, 227 (*note*).  
Machin, Mr., 233.  
M'Clure, Colonel, 234 (*note*).  
Mackennal, Alexander, 57, 58, 74, 82,  
92, 94, 96, 101, 102, 106, 144, 206,  
253, 265.  
Mackenzie, Kenneth, 238.  
M'Laren, Alexander, 144.  
Macnamara, J. R., 189.  
Maconachie, J. K., 93.  
Macpherson, J., 187.  
MacWilliam, W. B., 41, 83, 90, 91,  
156, 157.  
Maddock, Mr., 148.  
Mahood, J., 265.  
Malpas, 9, 29, 31, 32, 39, 50, 51, 52.  
— Congregationalism, 133-137.  
Manchester, 18, 24, 55, 63 (*note*).  
— Mission Board, 93.  
Mann, James, 250.  
— Leigh, 257.  
— W. H., 139.  
Marchfield, 27, 28.  
Marchmont, H., 125.  
Marple, 8, 22 (*note*), 24, 69.  
— Bridge, 16 (*note*), 24 (*note*).  
— Congregationalism, 212, 213.  
Marriages Bill, 73.  
Marris, George, 184.  
Marsden, John Astley, 256.  
Marsh, William, 245.  
Marshall, John, 46, 81, 112 (*note*), 143,  
163, 164, 165, 166.  
Marston, 50.  
— Congregationalism, 112-114.  
Martindale, Adam, 4, 6, 7, 103 (*note*),  
109, 190.  
Maskery, S., 82, 186, 187 (*note*).  
Massey, Joseph, 203.  
Maurice, William, 155, 208.  
Maxwell, J. T., 66, 165.  
Meanley, Richard, 11, 159.  
Meek, W. J., 105.  
Meetings of Union, places where held—  
Appendix III., 280-282.  
Meldrum, John, 22 (*note*), 26, 155 (*note*),  
191.  
Melland, Mr., 94 (*note*).  
Mellor, Enoch, 74, 226.  
Miall, Edward, 74.  
Middleton, J. A., 254.  
Middlewich, 8, 14, 19, 26, 27, 28, 30.  
— Congregationalism, 154-158.  
Midwood, W., 200.  
Miles, J. T., 111.  
Millward, Mr., 138.

Milne, James, 179 (*note*).  
— Richard, 214.  
— R. G., 31, 38, 39 (*note*), 238.  
— W., 57, 82, 83, 89.  
Mines, C. A., 82, 259, 260, 261, 263.  
Minshull, 27, 28, 36, 85.  
— Congregationalism, 161-166.  
Missions, Special, 59.  
Mobberley, 8, 52, 89, 92, 94, 95.  
— Mills, 51, 106 (*note*).  
Moffat, Robert, 185.  
Moffatt, Joseph, 210.  
Moir, A., 188.  
Mold, 44, 51, 52, 146.  
Moncrieff, W., 93.  
Monks Copenhall, 9.  
Moody and Sankey's Mission, 55.  
Moon, F., 58, 154, 161.  
Morgan, John, 122.  
Morgans, J. O., 136.  
Morley, 244.  
— Samuel, 54, 63.  
Morris, A. J., 91.  
— Caleb, 256.  
— E., 39, 51, 67, 81, 107, 115.  
— John, 29, 131, 134, 141.  
Moss, John, 168.  
Mottershead, Joseph, 158, 159.  
Mottram, 2, 8, 9, 41, 50.  
Mouldsworth, 9, 15.  
Moulton, 51, 52, 57.  
— Congregationalism, 112-114.  
Mycock, Alderman, 206.

N

Nantwich, 2, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19,  
26, 27 (*note*), 35, 50, 51, 52.  
— Congregationalism, 158-161.  
— District, 148.  
Neil, J. C., 249, 255.  
Neild, Isaac, 179.  
Neston, 30, 53 (*note*), 266, 267.  
Newcastle, 16, 90.  
New College Chapel, London, 90.  
New Church, 19.  
Newport, 16.  
Newth, Alfred, 107, 179.  
Newton, 28, 37, 40, 53.  
— Cheadle, 50.  
— (Hyde), 201, 202.  
Nicholas, T., 136, 206.  
Nicholls, S., 97.  
Nicholson, Gerard, 213.  
— J. O., 66.  
Niel, Robert, 27, 29, 155, 163.  
Nightingale, B., 22 (*note*).  
Noden, Jonathan, 234 (*note*).  
Norbury, 9, 51, 137.

Norman, Thomas, 190.  
 Normansheath, 134.  
 North Cheshire Book-Hawking Association, 95, 96.  
 ——— Rural Mission, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 187, 188.  
 ——— Wales Union, 51, 56, 146, 147.  
 Northenden, 9, 50, 86.  
 Northowram, 18.  
 Norwich, 2, 3, 14, 17, 19, 24, 25, 27, 34, 51, 70.  
 ——— Congregationalism, 109-112.  
 Norwich, 93.

## O

Oddy, Joseph, 142, 238.  
 O'Hanlon, William, 249.  
 Oldcastle, 134.  
 Oliver, Philip, 29, 121, 122, 124.  
 Oram, W., 30, 203.  
 Osborne, Joseph, 140.  
 Ouston, J. H., 108.  
 Over, 19, 31, 46.  
 ——— Congregationalism, 161-166.  
 Over-Tabley, 101.

## P

Panks, Robert, 179.  
 Parker, Joseph, 94 (*note*), 179 (*note*).  
 Parkgate, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 39, 40, 271.  
 ——— Congregationalism, 268, 269.  
 Parkinson, William, 194.  
 Parliament, 4, 5, 49.  
 Parrett, C. H., 112.  
 Parry, Mr., 138.  
 Parsons, James, 204, 228.  
 Partington, 14, 50, 57, 89, 92.  
 ——— Congregationalism, 94-96.  
 ——— John, 109.  
 Paull, J. W., 58, 59, 82, 83, 84, 91 (*note*), 173, 179, 181 (*note*), 204, 241.  
 Payne, H. S., 112, 161.  
 Pearce, A. E., 205.  
 Pearson, Benjamin, 244.  
 ——— Samuel, 255, 263.  
 Peckfurton, 15.  
 Pedlar, J., 249, 253, 260, 261, 262, 263.  
 Peirce, James, 12, 13.  
 Pendlebury, Jeremiah, 187.  
 Pennington, William, 138.  
 Peover, 27, 28.  
 Pepper St. (Mobberley), 96, 102.  
 Peters, T., 54, 120, 124, 125.  
 Peterson, M. F., 93.  
 Phillips, John, 154.

Phillips, T., 122.  
 Pickmere, 19.  
 Pinn, J., 188.  
 ——— T. W., 47, 82, 108, 115, 227, 228, 229, 232, 234, 241.  
 ——— W., 57.  
 Plaskett, W., 136.  
 Platt, John, 238.  
 Poore, J. L., 205.  
 Popery, 3.  
 Porter, Llewellyn, 241.  
 Port Sunlight, 53 (*note*), 267.  
 Potter, J. Cass, 30 (*note*), 237.  
 ——— James, 192.  
 Potts, A. W., 148, 152.  
 ——— W., 82.  
 Powell, E. P., 259, 263.  
 Powicke, F. J., 82, 193.  
 Preaching tours, 57, 58.  
 Prelacy, 3.  
 Prenton, 52, 61.  
 ——— Congregationalism, 252-254.  
 Presbyterians, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 40.  
 Prestbury, 8, 9.  
 Price, H. Ward, 58, 60, 61, 131, 229, 233, 234, 265.  
 Pridie, James, 29, 120 (*note*), 133, 137.  
 ——— William, 256.  
 Priestley, Dr. Joseph, 159.  
 Pringle, E., 250, 254.  
 Public Questions, Resolutions on, 49.  
 Pugsley, N., 29 (*note*), 31, 83, 179 (*note*), 204, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225.

## Q

Quakers, 8, 72.  
 Queen Victoria, 49.

## R

Radley, B., 65, 186.  
 Raffles, Thomas, 89, 132, 138, 203, 211, 228, 249, 251, 256.  
 Raines, John, 155.  
 Rathbone, James, 81, 209.  
 Rawson, George, 268.  
 ——— S., 268.  
 ——— T., 212 (*note*).  
 Reece, John, 167, 184.  
 Reeves, Thomas, 122.  
 Reform Bill, 73.  
 Reid, Andrew, 179.  
 ——— Stuart J., 243.  
 ——— W., 58.  
 Religious Tests, Abolition of, 73.  
 Renshaw, William, 97.

Restoration, 7.  
 Revival of Churches, 55.  
 Reynolds, H. R., 131.  
 — John, 29, 83, 129, 131, 133, 202.  
 Rhodes, James, 39 (*note*), 81, 237 (*note*), 238.  
 — William, 167, 168.  
 Rigby, Arthur, 144.  
 — John, 97.  
 — Samuel, 82, 94 (*note*), 126, 127, 144.  
 — Thomas, 58, 65, 82, 143, 146, 204.  
 Riley, Harper, 189.  
 — J. D., 44, 56, 146.  
 — W., 206.  
 Ringway, 8, 14, 15.  
 Rivulet Controversy, 74.  
 Roberts, Thomas, 179 (*note*).  
 — R., 268, 271 (*note*).  
 Robinson, F. R., 234 (*note*).  
 — J., 83, 155, 156, 157.  
 — Dr. J., 140 (*note*).  
 — Thomas, 46, 67, 82, 194, 204.  
 — William, 138, 140.  
 Robjohns, H. T., 90, 91, 107.  
 Roby, William, 23, 24, 103, 128, 167, 202, 245.  
 Rock Ferry, 51.  
 — Congregationalism, 259-261.  
 Ross, E., 112.  
 Rostherne, 8, 9, 97, 100.  
 Rothwell, Miss Ann, 17.  
 Royton, 87.  
 Rules of Union, Successive Revisions of, Appendix VII., 292-305.  
 Runcorn, 8, 27, 31, 36 (*note*), 59, 60.  
 — Congregationalism, 137-140.  
 Rural Mission (Bowdon), 96.  
 Rusholme, 93.  
 Ryan, George F., 221.  
 Rylands, John, 144.

S

Saughton, 15.  
 Sale, 39, 86, 87.  
 — Congregationalism, 114-116.  
 Salter's Hall, 12.  
 Sandbach, 5, 8, 9, 19, 27, 28, 30, 51, 52, 59.  
 — Congregationalism, 167-171.  
 Saxby, Charles, 246.  
 Sayers, A. H., 144.  
 Scholefield, Nathanael, 164, 166.  
 Scholes, Nathanael, 207.  
 Schollow Green, 19.  
 Scott, Adam, 83, 84, 116, 265.  
 — Caleb, 259.  
 — Jonathan, 15-17, 18, 20, 27, 103,

110, 128, 155, 159, 160, 184, 208, 209.  
 Seacombe, 30, 52, 61.  
 — Congregationalism, 264-266.  
 Secretaries, General, 83.  
 — District, Bowdon, 85.  
 — Chester, 120.  
 — Crewe, 148.  
 — Stockport and Macclesfield, 173.  
 — Wirral, 249.  
 Senior, B., 237.  
 Sevier, C. T., 94.  
 Sewell, R. H., 250.  
 Sharples, M. H., 231, 232.  
 Shaw, Dr., 5.  
 — Henry, 89 (*note*).  
 Sheldon, 7.  
 Shepley, Charles, 191.  
 Short, G., 40.  
 Sidebottom, J., 100.  
 — James, 226, 229.  
 — Joseph, 154, 212.  
 Sidmouth, Lord, 72.  
 Silvester, William, 27, 29, 30, 141, 150, 162, 163, 167, 168, 170, 171, 172.  
 Simon, D. W., 251.  
 — Samuel, 196.  
 Simpson, John, 212. *88*  
 Singleton, J. J., 241.  
 Slavery, Abolition of, 73.  
 Sleath, T., 121. *S/*  
 Smale, J., 69, 70.  
 Smith, James, 187, 216.  
 — John, 159.  
 — J. J., 60.  
 — J. K., 125.  
 — Robert, 160.  
 — Watson, 44, 64, 66, 81, 173, 243.  
 Socinian Controversy, 11, 12.  
 Solemn League and Covenant, 2, 3, 4.  
 Somerville, Dr., 242.  
 Soper, Richard, 254.  
 South, Dr., 11.  
 Southam, Edward, 81.  
 Spear, Robert, 24, 114.  
 Special Missions, 58, 59, 61.  
 Spring Hill College, 91 (*note*).  
 Stallybrass, W. C., 257.  
 Stanley, Matthew, 252.  
 Star Hall, Ancoats, 93.  
 Stenner, J. F., 90.  
 Sterling, J., 188.  
 Stewart, Mr., 94.  
 Stockport, 8, 9, 14, 18, 22 (*note*), 23, 24, 26, 34 (*note*), 41, 51, 52, 61, 63.  
 — Congregationalism, 214-235.  
 — Brinksway, 231-233.  
 — Buxton Road, 233-235.  
 — Hanover, 222-226.

Stockport, Orchard Street, 218-222.  
 — Tabernacle, 214-218.  
 — Wellington Road, 226-228.  
 — Wycliffe, 228-229.  
 — Union, 230-231.  
 Stockport and Macclesfield Districts,  
 173-248.  
 Stone, Edward, 207.  
 Street, B., 207.  
 Stretford, 115.  
 Stringer, Ralph, 206, 207.  
 Stroyan, A., 173, 206.  
 Sturdy, Wm., 179.  
 Styal, 30.  
 Sutton, 30, 31, 37.  
 — Congregationalism, 269-271.  
 — James, 138.

## T

Tabley, 57.  
 Tarporley, 2, 8, 9.  
 Tarvin, 2.  
 Tattenhall, 19, 27, 28, 29, 51, 52, 116,  
 117.  
 — Congregationalism, 140-143.  
 Tattersall, J. L., 102.  
 Taylor, Gilbert, 236.  
 — Moses, 128.  
 — Timothy, 214.  
 Tenison MS., 7.  
 Test Act, 73.  
 Thelwall, 57.  
 Thomas, Andrew, 139.  
 — David, 226.  
 — H. Arnold, 101.  
 — J. D., 140, 147.  
 — Owen, 146.  
 — W., 118.  
 — W. D., 85, 97.  
 — W. Eaton, 249, 265.  
 Thompson, Frederick, 194, 195.  
 — Jemima (Mrs. Luke), 129.  
 — Joseph, 43, 49, 64, 67, 81, 82, 83,  
 243.  
 — Richard, 251.  
 — T. H., 265.  
 Thomson, Alexander, 179 (*note*), 194.  
 Thornton, Edward, 236.  
 — John, 216, 229.  
 — J. J., 152.  
 Thornton Hough, 53 (*note*).  
 Thorp, J., 133.  
 — William, 223 (*note*).  
 Thorpe, John, 30, 129.  
 — William, 128.  
 Threapwood, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 133-137.  
 Tiller, W., 135.

Tilston, 141.  
 Tintwistle, 14, 22 (*note*), 23, 24, 26, 31,  
 34, 35, 39, 42.  
 — Congregationalism, 235-238.  
 Tisier, John, 160.  
 Todd, A. C., 141, 142.  
 Toft, Thomas, 103 (*note*).  
 Tomkinson, John, 138.  
 Towers, W. H., 125.  
 Tracey, W., 183.  
 Tranmere, 30.  
 — Congregationalism, 261-264.  
 Transvaal, 49.  
 Trevallyn, 123, 124.  
 Turkish Atrocities, 49.  
 Turner, H. W., 243.  
 — James, 27, 29, 30, 31, 39, 40, 41,  
 81, 83, 89, 98, 103, 104, 129, 211, 220,  
 270.  
 — John, 110.  
 — Samuel, 187.  
 Turton, William, 158.  
 Twemlow, Nathaniel, 154.

## U

Uniformity, Act of, 7.  
 Unitarianism, 13, 14, 17, 72, 159.  
 Universities, 49, 73.  
 Upton, 14, 132.  
 Urwick, W., 7 (*note*), 9, 15 (*note*), 42,  
 44, 48, 53, 96, 133 (*note*), 167, 173,  
 192, 246, 247.

## V

Vasey, Henry, 113.  
 Vaudrey, William, 159.  
 Vaughan, Bishop of Chester, 1.  
 — Robert, 192, 205, 256.  
 Voluntary Associations, 6.

## W

Waddington, J., 221.  
 Wade, T. S., 174, 175.  
 Walkden, Peter, 216.  
 Walker, G. K., 44 (*note*), 82, 148, 156.  
 — Ibbotson, 81.  
 — S. Gamble, 267.  
 Wallace, W., 258.  
 Wallasey, 7 (*note*).  
 Walters, W. Carey, 106.  
 Walworth, Charles, 185.  
 Warburton, 57, 95.  
 Warrington, 14.  
 Warwickshire Union, 59.  
 Waterhouse, Sidney, 145.

Watson, C. E., 108.  
 Watt, D. G., 39 (*note*), 41, 83, 111.  
 Watts, Isaac, 256.  
 — Sir James, 96, 178, 182, 212, 230 (*note*).  
 Weaverham, 9.  
 Webster, Thomas, 116.  
 Wervin, 133.  
 West, H. J., 146.  
 West Kirby, 64.  
 Western College, 93.  
 Westminster Assembly, 2, 3.  
 — Catechism, 12.  
 — Duke of, 122, 123.  
 Whaley Bridge, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 238-241.  
 Wharton, 24.  
 Wheelock, 14, 15, 30, 50, 52, 58, 59.  
 — Congregationalism, 167-171.  
 Whitechurch, 16.  
 White, Ebenezer, 24, 26, 28 (*note*), 83, 128.  
 — George, 140.  
 Whiteacre, John, 207.  
 Whitehead, John, 24.  
 Whitfield, G. G., 148, 164 (*note*), 165.  
 Whitgift, Archbishop, 1.  
 Whitley, Joseph, 95.  
 Whitworth, B., 108 (*note*).  
 — Joseph, 89.  
 Widdows, Mr., 138.  
 Wilcoxon, Mr., 124, 125.  
 Wilkins, E. E., 258.  
 Wilkinson, John, 90.  
 — Thomas, 102.  
 Wilks, John, 74.  
 Williams, E. P., 85.  
 — F. S., 251.  
 — John, 131, 184.  
 — T. Hallett, 85, 116, 259.

Williams, W., 134.  
 Williamson, C., 129.  
 Wilmslow, 6, 8, 9, 32, 37, 38, 44.  
 — Congregationalism, 241-244.  
 Wilson, Alexander, 45, 81, 182, 225, 226.  
 — J., 194.  
 — J. H., 63 (*note*).  
 — Job, 15, 17, 20, 24, 37, 99, 110, 138, 140, 155, 159 (*note*), 160, 161, 163, 164, 209, 245.  
 Wirral, 9, 14, 27, 28, 30, 48, 51.  
 — District, 249-271.  
 Wishart, James, 252, 254.  
 Witton, 50, 51, 52.  
 — Congregationalism, 112-114.  
 Wollerton, 16.  
 Wood, Frederick, 249, 264 (*note*).  
 — G. Stanley, 47, 58, 65 (*note*), 66, 67, 82, 83, 174, 180, 204.  
 — Joseph, 70, 82, 105, 127 (*note*), 244, 265.  
 Wood End, 50, 247, 248.  
 Woodhouse, J. T., 194, 216, 247 (*note*).  
 Woodley, 51, 52, 56.  
 — Congregationalism, 194-195.  
 Woodside, 30.  
 Worford, 14.  
 Wrenbury, 8.  
 Wrexham, 15, 40, 57.  
 Wright, Joseph, 49.  
 Wybunbury, 9.

Y

Yates, J., 196.  
 — Samuel, 139.  
 Yonge, John, 144.









